Art Expressions

Aspects of Faith

The Lion

Throning Lion by Ludwig Knaus (1829-1910)

Dedication

This Book is dedicated to
the One about whom the Volume of the Book speaks,
the Lord Jesus Christ. May His family grow.

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ChatGPT helped with summaries and images.

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Acknowledgements

My humble gratitude for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
who guided this work.
To my wonderful wife, Telli, whose love and support helped me finish this project through many health concerns.
To family and those who encouraged me.
To all the gifted artists, past and present, whose inclusion in this work help us connect to the individuals and events recorded in Scripture.

Scripture in Italics – guided by the American Standard Version
And the English Standard Version

Preface

Art Expressions: Aspects of Faith explores the way art vividly helps our understanding of Christ's sacrifice, reconciling the Lord with mankind: Signs and symbols, spread of the faith, end time nearness, and struggles with deception.

The Four Evangelists by Circle of Anthonie Blocklandt van Montfoort (16th century)

Warning—O*ur wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* (Ephesians 6:12)

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Signs for the Believer

Ezekiel's Vision by Raphael (1518)

Service and Sacrifice

Four Faces

Ox, Lion, Eagle, and Man Created by ChatGPT (2026)

Ezekiel was the first to write of them together around 600 B.C. 700 years earlier, Moses wrote about them individually in Deuteronomy 32-33. Artists have drawn them for centuries. Four creatures detailed in the Word that have some connection to our Creator. What do they mean? I imagine they reflect important characteristics about the Lord and His creation.

Ponder the thought.

Cherubim

Cherubim by ChatGPT (2026)

The cherubim had four faces. They guard the entrance to Eden, the Ark of the Covenant, and the throne of God.

Ezekiel provides descriptions in Ezekiel 1 and 10. *Everyone had four faces, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.* (Ezekiel 10;21)

We are not sure of their appearance.

The Hebrew Encampment

The Erection of the Tabernacle and the Sacred Vessels illustration from the Figures de la Bible by Gerard Hoet (1728) Colored by Chat GPT

The organization of the Hebrew encampment had four faces.

In the wilderness, the twelve tribes of Israel were organized into four main camps surrounding the Tabernacle, each centered around one leading tribe and its standard. According to rabbinic and Jewish tradition, these four foundational banners bore the images of a Lion (Judah), a Man (Reuben), an Ox (Ephraim), and an Eagle (Dan).

Note that every aspect of the tabernacle points to Christ: Linen fence on bronze sockets representing suffering; one entrance; altar of sacrifice; bronze laver for washing representing the Word; inside find the menorah representing the light of the world; showbread representing the bread of life; and altar of incense representing His intercession for us; and of course the Ark of the Covenant with Mercy Seat inside the Holy of Holies; all set on sockets of silver representing His shed blood.

The Four Evangelists

The Four Evangelists by Abraham Bloemaert (1612-1615)

The gospels have four faces. Each of the four approach Christ's life from a different perspective.

Matthew, a Levite, sees Christ as fulfilling the Law, being the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Mark, Peter's scribe, writing an account without a genealogy, sees Christ as a servant, sacrificing His life for ours. Representing service like an ox.

Luke was a gentile and views Christ from a human point of view.

John sees His divinity as the Creator and the only begotten Son of the Father, soaring as an eagle.

The Apostles

Ordination by Nicolas Poussin (1630s)

The Apostles were the first to believe in Christ and His mission to reconcile mankind to the Father; among the first to spend time with Him after His resurrection; and the first to receive the Spirit at Pentecost.

Do their lives shed any light on how being filled with the Spirit of God changed them?

Does the Spirit of God change believers today?

Saint Peter

Christ appearing to Saint Peter on the Appian Way by Annibale Carracci (1601-1602)

Peter was given the keys to the church. He was pragmatic and impulsive. His wife was Gogia. Their sons were Joel and Yovnana, and their only daughter Sabistha. (for Apostles' families, see Clavis ECCA 240) An interesting story is told about him when he was Bishop of Rome.

The Quo Vadis Apparition is a famous Christian tradition wherein the Apostle Peter, fleeing execution in Rome, encounters the risen Jesus walking toward the city. When Peter asks, "Quo vadis?" (Latin for "Where are You going?"), Jesus replies that He is going to Rome to be crucified again. This encounter, recorded in the apocryphal text the Acts of Peter, made Peter realize he needed to return to Rome to face his martyrdom, which he did, eventually being crucified upside down.

Saint Peter was crucified in Rome around 64 AD under Emperor Nero, who used Christians as scapegoats for the Great Fire of Rome. Because Peter was a prominent Christian leader and not a Roman citizen, he was subjected to crucifixion, which was the standard Roman execution for treason and runaway slaves. The narrative of Peter's martyrdom comes primarily from the late 2nd-century apocryphal text known as the Acts of Peter. According to this writing, Peter requested his cross be inverted, stating his feet should be directed toward heaven because he was not worthy to be crucified like his Lord. This inverted symbol has since become known as the Cross of Saint Peter. He is buried directly beneath the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Rome.

Saint Thomas

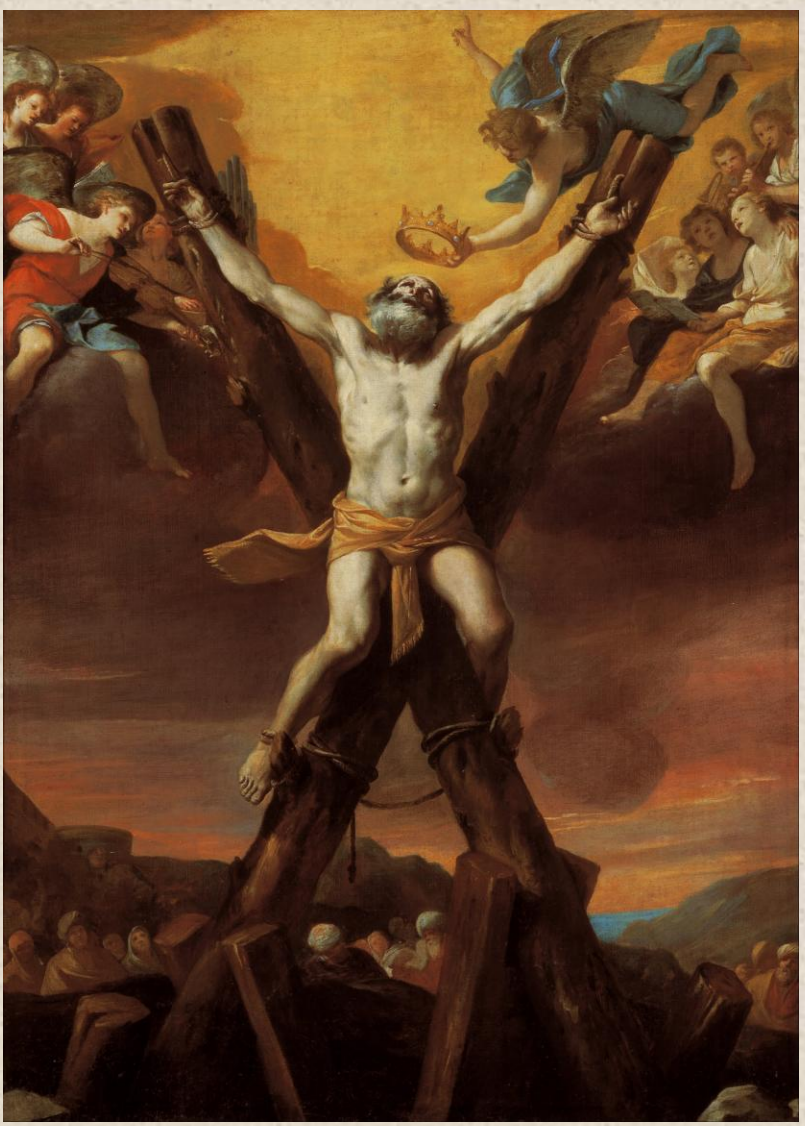
Saint Thomas by Peter Paul Rubens (1610-1612)

According to local legend, the most famous miracle of St. Thomas in India occurred in Palayur (modern-day Kerala) to convert a group of Hindu priests (Nambudiris). When the priests were throwing handfuls of water into the air as a ritual offering, St. Thomas challenged them: if the water truly pleased their gods, it should stay suspended in the air.

The priests laughed, confident it was impossible. In response, St. Thomas made the sign of the cross, threw water into the air, and caused it to remain magically suspended. The water then transformed into a bunch of sparkling flowers, which led to the conversion of the Brahmins and the founding of the Palayur Church.

According to ancient Syro-Malabar texts, St. Thomas arrived by sea in Kerala (at Maliankara) in 52 AD and established seven primary churches in the region. Several localized apocryphal texts, such as the Acts of Thomas, describe him performing exorcisms and raising the dead. In 72 AD, he was martyred by a spear in Mylapore, Chennai, where a cathedral stands today over his traditional burial site.

Saint Andrew



The Crucifixion of St Andrew by Mattia Preti (1651)

Apostle Andrew is primarily known as Jesus's first disciple and for being the older brother of Simon Peter. His wife was Antoli and they had a daughter, Mary. He is highly celebrated for his early missionary work, bringing others to Christ, and his distinctive martyrdom. During his missionary travels, he is said to have healed the blind, cured the sick, cast out demons, and even raised the dead.

Andrew was executed around 60 AD by the Roman governor Aegeates in Patras, Greece, for refusing to stop preaching Christianity and renounce his faith. Because he converted the governor's wife, Maximilla, the enraged proconsul ordered Andrew to be scourged and crucified. Andrew requested to be crucified on an X-shaped cross (now known as "Saint Andrew's Cross") because he felt entirely unworthy to die on the same type of traditional T-shaped cross used for Jesus.

The primary relics of the Apostle Andrew are housed in the crypt of the Amalfi Cathedral (Duomo di Sant'Andrea) in Amalfi, Italy. Originally buried in Greece, his remains were moved to Constantinople in 357 AD and later brought to Amalfi in 1208 following the Crusades.

Saint James the Greater

Saint James the Greater Led to His Execution by Noël Coypel (1628-1707)

James, the son of Zebedee, is primarily known in the Bible for witnessing the miracles of Jesus Christ. As a member of Jesus' inner circle alongside Peter and John, he was present for the Transfiguration, the healing of Jairus's daughter, and the miraculous catch of fish.

James was executed in Jerusalem around 44 AD by order of King Herod Agrippa I. Herod had him killed with a sword as a political maneuver to please Jewish religious leaders and suppress the rapidly growing Christian movement.

According to tradition, while James was being led to his execution in Judea, he healed a paralyzed man begging for help. This miracle resulted in the conversion of the execution guard, Josias, who was then baptized by James and martyred alongside him.

Legend holds that after his decapitation, his body was miraculously transported by angels in a rudderless stone boat to Galicia, Spain, where his remains are housed in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

According to ancient Armenian Christian tradition, his severed head remained in Jerusalem. It is believed to be buried beneath the altar in the separate Chapel of St. James, located to the left of the main sanctuary of the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral of St. James in the Old City of Jerusalem. The exact spot is marked by a piece of red marble.

Saint Philip

Saint Philip by Pompeo Batoni (1740-1743)

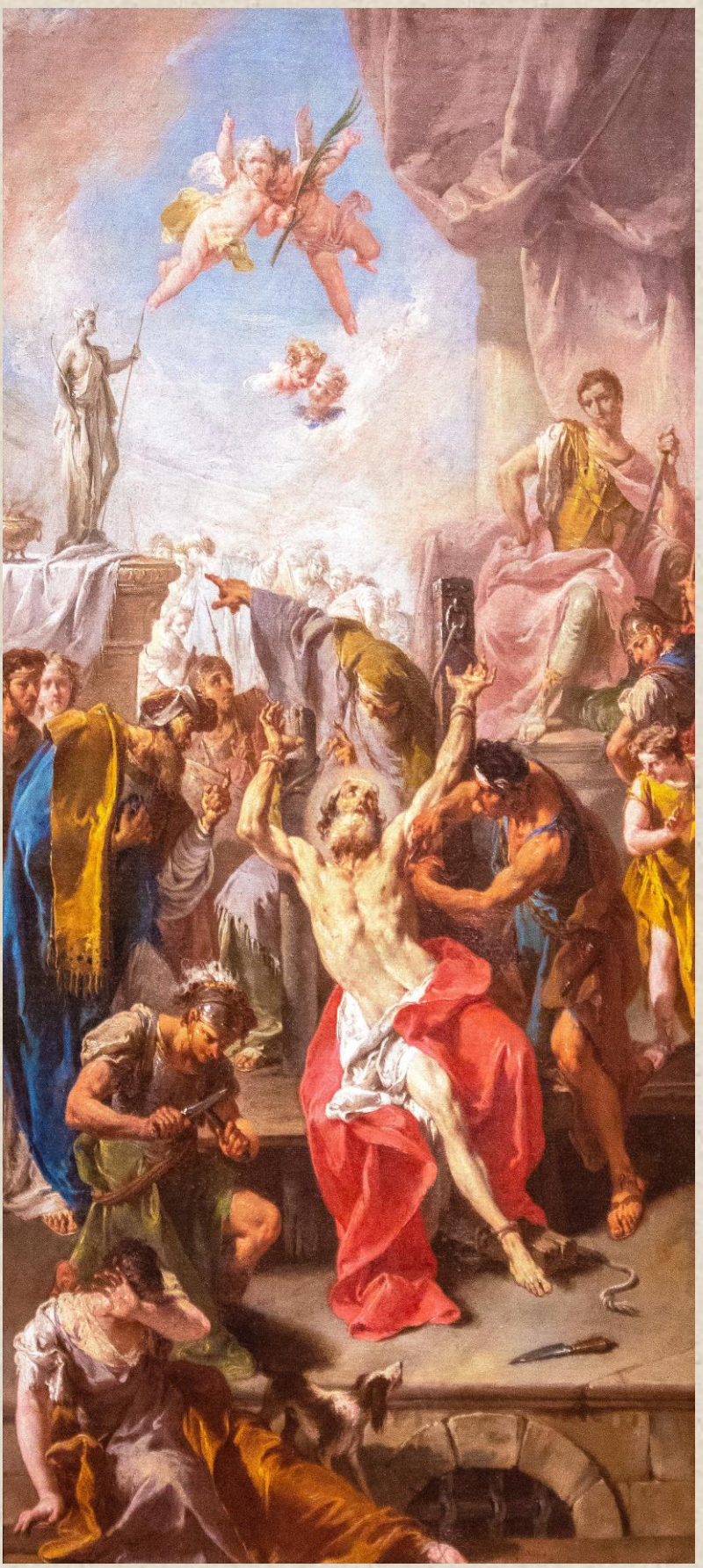
Saint Philip is celebrated for performing numerous signs, miracles, and healings during his missionary travels in Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria. His miraculous works include curing the paralyzed, casting out demons, healing blindness, and restoring the dead to life. The documented miracles and wonders associated with the Apostle Philip are described in both biblical and historical accounts. His wife was called Thēokti and their son Theophilus.

Philip was martyred around 80 AD in the city of Hierapolis (modern-day Turkey). He was executed by local Roman authorities and pagan priests because his successful preaching, miraculous healings, and conversion of the local governor's wife enraged the city's religious and political leaders.

According to the apocryphal Acts of Philip, the proconsul of the city ordered Philip and the Apostle Bartholomew to be tortured and crucified upside down. While on the cross, Philip preached to the crowd, which caused the people to demand his release. Bartholomew was taken down, but Philip requested to remain on the cross until he died.

The Apostle Philip's body was buried in Hierapolis (modern-day Pamukkale, Turkey), however, his skeletal relics were later relocated to remove them from barbarian threats. Today, his relics are enshrined in the crypt of the Basilica of the Twelve Holy Apostles in Rome, Italy.

Saint Bartholomew



Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew
by Giovanni Battista Pittoni (1735)

According to ancient Christian tradition, Bartholomew and Philip were crucified together in the city of Hierapolis (in modern-day Turkey). While on the cross, an earthquake struck, moving the crowd to demand their release; Philip died on the cross, but Bartholomew was taken down alive. After being taken down from the cross, Bartholomew baptized the newly converted onlookers.

He then traveled extensively as a missionary. While preaching in India and Armenia, Bartholomew cast out demons and healed the severely ill daughter of King Polymius. He later cured the king and his household, leading to their mass conversion. His wife was Thomosia and their son, Bartimios.

He was executed 69-71 AD on the orders of King Astyages because his preaching and healing miracles successfully converted the Armenian King Polymius to Christianity, which enraged local pagan priests and the royal court. He was flayed alive (skinned) and subsequently beheaded.

The recorded date of his crucifixion with Philip does not line up with his final execution. This is one of the problems when dealing with apocryphal texts, some material may be unreliable.

The body of the Apostle Bartholomew is believed to rest in the Basilica of San Bartolomeo all 'Isola (St. Bartholomew-on-the-Tiber) in Rome, Italy. According to Catholic tradition, his relics were transported to Rome by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III in the 10th century and placed in a red porphyry basin beneath the main altar.

Saint John

Saint John the Evangelist on Patmos by Pedro Orrente (1620)

Apostle St. John is credited with both recording the miraculous "signs" of Jesus in the Gospel of John and performing his own apostolic miracles, which include surviving a cauldron of boiling oil in Rome, resurrecting the dead, drinking deadly poison without harm, and producing a healing dust called "manna" from his grave.

According to tradition, the Apostle John was exiled to the Island of Patmos around 95 AD during the reign of Roman Emperor Domitian. Banished for preaching the Gospel, John spent his exile doing hard labor in the island's quarries, where he received the visions that became the Book of Revelation.

He is believed to have died of natural causes in Ephesus (modern-day Turkey) around 100 AD, at an advanced age and is traditionally believed to be buried in Selçuk, Turkey (near the ancient city of Ephesus). His suspected final resting place lies beneath the ruins of the historic Basilica of Saint John, a grand 6th-century church built by Emperor Justinian.

Saint Matthew

The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew by Caravaggio (1599-1600)

According to ancient Christian traditions, the Apostle Matthew traveled to Ethiopia to spread the Gospel after Pentecost. His wife was named Sktania and they had a son, Matathia. He is credited with founding the early Ethiopian Church, unmasking local magicians, and transforming the pagan area into a thriving Christian community. He allegedly rebuked King Hirtacus for lusting after Ephigenia, a woman who had taken a vow of virginity as a nun. Enraged, the king ordered his soldiers to kill the apostle while he was standing at the altar, 60-68 AD. He is frequently said to have been stabbed, hacked to death with a halberd or beheaded.

St. Matthew's earthly remains are reputed to lie in the crypt beneath the altar of the Salerno Cathedral (Duomo di Salerno) in southern Italy.

Saint James the Less

Martyrdom of Saint James the Less by Pedro Orrente (1639)

Accounts by early church historians, such as Hippolytus, claim James was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem in 62 AD after boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. Because he survived the fall, attackers are said to have beaten him to death with a fuller's club.

The body of St. James the Less, the brother of Jesus and the first Bishop of Jerusalem, is believed to be buried beneath the main, central altar at the Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem.

Saint Judas Thaddeus

Martyrdom of the Apostle Judas Thaddeus by Corrado Giaquinto (1750s)

Extrabiblical texts state Saint Jude Thaddeus preached in Judea, Samaria, Idumaea, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Libya. His wife was Thēopistis and their son, Kalistratos. Some legends claim he founded a church in Edessa (modern-day Turkey). He was killed around 65 AD for refusing to deny his Christian faith. According to historical and religious traditions, he was executed in either Persia, Syria, or Armenia after angering local pagan leaders and magistrates by aggressively preaching the Gospel and actively refuting the worship of pagan idols. The most prominent traditions suggest he was either beaten to death with a club or axed to death. One Armenian tradition notes he was martyred in 66 AD in Armenia by order of King Sanatruk. According to Catholic tradition, after his death, his remains were brought to Rome and placed in a crypt in St. Peter's Basilica, where they are believed to rest in the same tomb as the apostle Simon the Zealot.

Saint Simon the Zealot

Simon the Apostle by Anonymous (17th century)

After Pentecost, Simon the Zealot left his homeland to spread the Christian gospel across distant regions, including Egypt, Northern Africa, and Persia. His wife was Mari and their son, Oserki. He ultimately died a martyr, though historical accounts conflict on the exact location and method of his death.

Many Western accounts, including Jacobus de Voragine's 13th-century compilation, The Golden Legend, state that Simon evangelized in Mesopotamia and Persia with Jude the Apostle. In Persia, he was allegedly martyred for refusing to sacrifice to pagan gods, reportedly being sawed in half around 64 AD. This method is why he is frequently depicted holding a saw in Christian iconography.

Many historical accounts suggest his remains (shared with the Apostle Jude) were moved to St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican City) in the 7th century and are venerated in a shared tomb in the left transept under the Altar of St. Joseph.

Saint Matthias

Saint Matthias by Peter Paul Rubens (1611)

St. Matthias is the apostle chosen to replace Judas Iscariot following Judas's betrayal and death. He is unique among the disciples because he is the only apostle not directly called by Jesus during His earthly ministry; rather, he was selected by the remaining apostles through prayer and the casting of lots.

Matthias is believed to have spent his life spreading the Gospel in regions like Judea, Cappadocia, and the Caspian Sea. While specific biblical details are limited, early Christian tradition largely holds that he was martyred for his faith.

Several traditions maintain that Matthias was seized by Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, stoned, and then ultimately beheaded, 63-80 AD. Some relics are believed to be housed in the Abbey of St. Matthias in Trier, Germany, and the Abbey of Santa Giustina in Padua, Italy, while other Greek sources suggest his remains are buried in the castle of Gonio-Apsaros, Georgia.

Saint Paul

The Martyrdom of Saint Paul by Mattia Preti (1613-1699)

Apparently Paul was married to Mariadon and their sons were Saul and Tikos. After spending decades establishing early Christian churches across the Roman Empire, the Apostle Paul was imprisoned and is widely believed to have been martyred in Rome. According to early Christian tradition, because he held Roman citizenship, he was executed by beheading, likely around 67 AD during the reign of Emperor Nero.

Early Christians buried his body on the Ostian Way, and in the 4th century, the Roman Emperor Constantine built the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls over what is believed to be his tomb.

All the apostles showed, strength, service and sacrifice while proclaiming the majesty of Christ.

Eagle

Golden Eagle by Ferdinand von Wright (1884)

The Apostles held Christ's vision. They had a heavenly perspective. They traveled widely.

The Eagle represents the birds of the sky: swiftness, penetrating sight, and majesty. Perhaps God's exaltation, omniscience, swift justice, penetrating vision, and heavenly perspective. Also see renewed strength and protection.

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. (Exodus 19:4)

As an eagle that stirs up her nest, That flutters over her young, He spread abroad his wings, He took them, He bare them on his pinions. (Deuteronomy 32:11)

They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

Ox

Study of Ox Heads by Léon Augustin Lhermitte (1908)

The Apostles showed extraordinary strength, patiently presenting truth. They served others and sacrificed their lives.

The Ox represents domesticated animals: strength, endurance, and patient service. Perhaps God's diligence, service, steadfast provision, patience, and readiness to sacrifice.

Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; But much increase is by the strength of the ox. (Provers 14:4)

God brings them forth out of Egypt; He has as it were the strength of the wild-ox. (Numbers 23:22)

Take ye a he-goat for a sin-offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt-offering; and an ox and a ram for peace-offerings, to sacrifice before Jehovah. (Leviticus 9:3-4)

Lion

Lion Licking Its Paw by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1886)

The Apostles showed great courage and steadfastness in presenting Jesus Christ as the Lion of Judah.

The Lion represents wild, untamed beasts of the field: kingship, courage, and majesty. Perhaps God's sovereignty, absolute rule and kingly authority over the universe.

Jacob's prophecy: *Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, thou art gone up: He stooped down, he couched as a lion, And as a lioness; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh come.* (Genesis 49:9-10)

One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. (Revelation 5:5)

But the lion also shows ferocity. *Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Peter 5:8) Perhaps imitating Christ.

Man

Creation of Adam by Michelangelo (1510)

The Apostles were the best of mankind. We are all flawed, but when you rely on the Lord, His characteristics shine through us. We see this throughout Scripture.

The Human represents humanity: intelligence, rationality, and being made in God's image. Perhaps God’s intelligence, governance, rational judgment, wisdom, and redemptive plan for mankind.

Paul's Writing

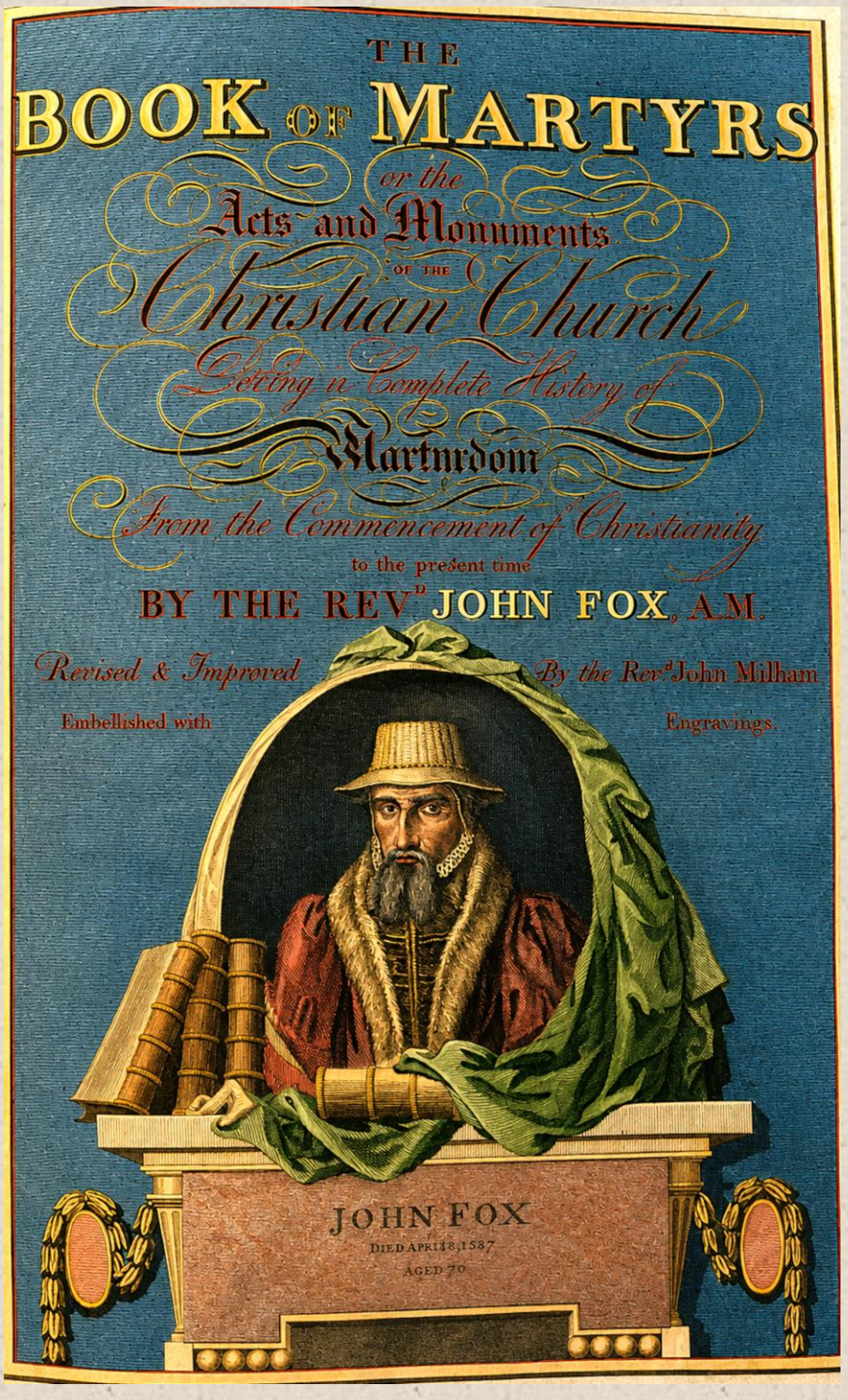
Saint Paul by El Greco (1605)

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul explained the Spirit we receive when we believe changes us over time. *We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, <u>are transformed</u> into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.* (2 Corinthians 3:18)

And to the Romans he said, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but <u>be ye transformed</u> by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Romans 12:1-2)

So, believers have their hearts and minds transformed by the Spirit as we listen and respond to His urging through our conscience. Read the Word and ponder its meaning for yourself.

Martyrs



The Book Of Martyrs, by John Fox, published in London in 1814 by Thomas Kelly
Photo by ZoneAlarm5 (2019) Colored by ChatGPT

Fox's Book of Martyrs covers thousands of individuals who have been martyred for their faith while attesting to the truth as they understood it, having been filled by the Spirit of God. It has been revised numerous times. You may order the book for yourself.

Enoch

The Prophets Elijah and Enoch - place of origin unknown (17th-century)

We can see the Lord's influence in the Old Testament. Let's examine a few.

Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (Genesis 5:21-24)

Clearly a dedicated follower as one of two who never died. Elijah being the other.

Noah

Animals gathering for Noah's Ark by Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1680)

Animals gather for Noah, a man fiercely dedicated to the Lord. As the only family to escape the deluge, I imagine he was the only one sacrificing to God in humility and thanks for his circumstance.

Noah toiled for decades building the ark.

Abraham

The Sacrifice of Isaac by Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (mid 1750s)

Obedience at difficult times, Abraham's sacrifice foreshadowed Christ's death on the cross for forgiveness of sin.

This man left his hometown to travel to an unknown land and start a family which would be God's chosen.

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curse thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 12:1-3)

Shiphrah and Puah

Pharaoh and the Midwives by James Tissot (1896-1902)

Shiphrah and Puah were two Hebrew midwives who practiced civil disobedience by refusing Pharaoh's order to kill newborn Hebrew boys. Their quiet rebellion saved a generation, including Moses, and showed divine vision, strength, and service. (Exodus 1:15-21)

Moses

Moses and Aaron with the Pharaoh by Pietro della Vecchia (1650-1678)

Moses was raised in the royal court, though a Hebrew by birth. He demonstrated strength and service in carrying out the Lord's direction to free His people and deliver the Law. He prepared the Hebrews for the Passover, which again foreshadowed Christ's sacrificial death for His creation, and led them through the wilderness.

Joshua

Joshua passing the River Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant by Benjamin West (1800)

When Moses died, the torch was passed to Joshua. Here the Hebrews cross the Jordan in preparation to take Jericho. The Lord fully supported this warrior, even stopping the sun for a day so Joshua could complete a battle.

Rahab

Spies Escape from Jericho
by Elias van Nijmegen (1731)

Rahab, a Canaanite woman from Jericho, protected two Israelite spies, enabling the conquest of the city.

Because of her faith and bravery, she and her family were spared when Jericho fell.

She later married an Israelite and is listed in the genealogy of Jesus.

Deborah

Deborah Praises Jael (Jud. 5:1-3,24-31) by Gustave Doré (1866)
Colored by ChatGPT

Deborah, the only female judge and a prophetess in ancient Israel, not only led the nation but also directed the military campaign against Sisera, riding directly into battle with the hesitant general Barak. (Judges 4-5)

Samson

Samson with the Jawbone by Salomon de Bray (1636)

The Lord filled Samson with the Spirit of God to provide the super-human strength required to accomplish numerous tasks. To be sure, Samson was not a perfect example, which is why he was taken captive, but he followed the Lord's direction to keep His people safe. (Book of Judges 13-16)

Ruth

Ruth Swears Fidelity to Naomi by Pieter Lastman (1614)

After Ruth and Naomi were both widowed, Ruth demonstrated radical loyalty by leaving her home to care for Naomi in a foreign land. She then boldly navigated cultural customs to secure their future in Bethlehem. She too is in the genealogy of Christ. (Book of Ruth)

When Naomi told her daughters-in-law to go to their ancestral home to find a husband, *Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee, for where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if anything but death part thee and me.* (Ruth 1:16-17)

David

David, Oh, that I had wings like a Dove, For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Psalm 55:6
By Frederic Leighton (1865)

The Lord raised up David to be their king; to whom also He bore witness and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who shall do all My will. (Acts 13:22)

David was a warrior for the Lord, and though he had failings, he followed God's direction. Strength, service, and humble repentance when required.

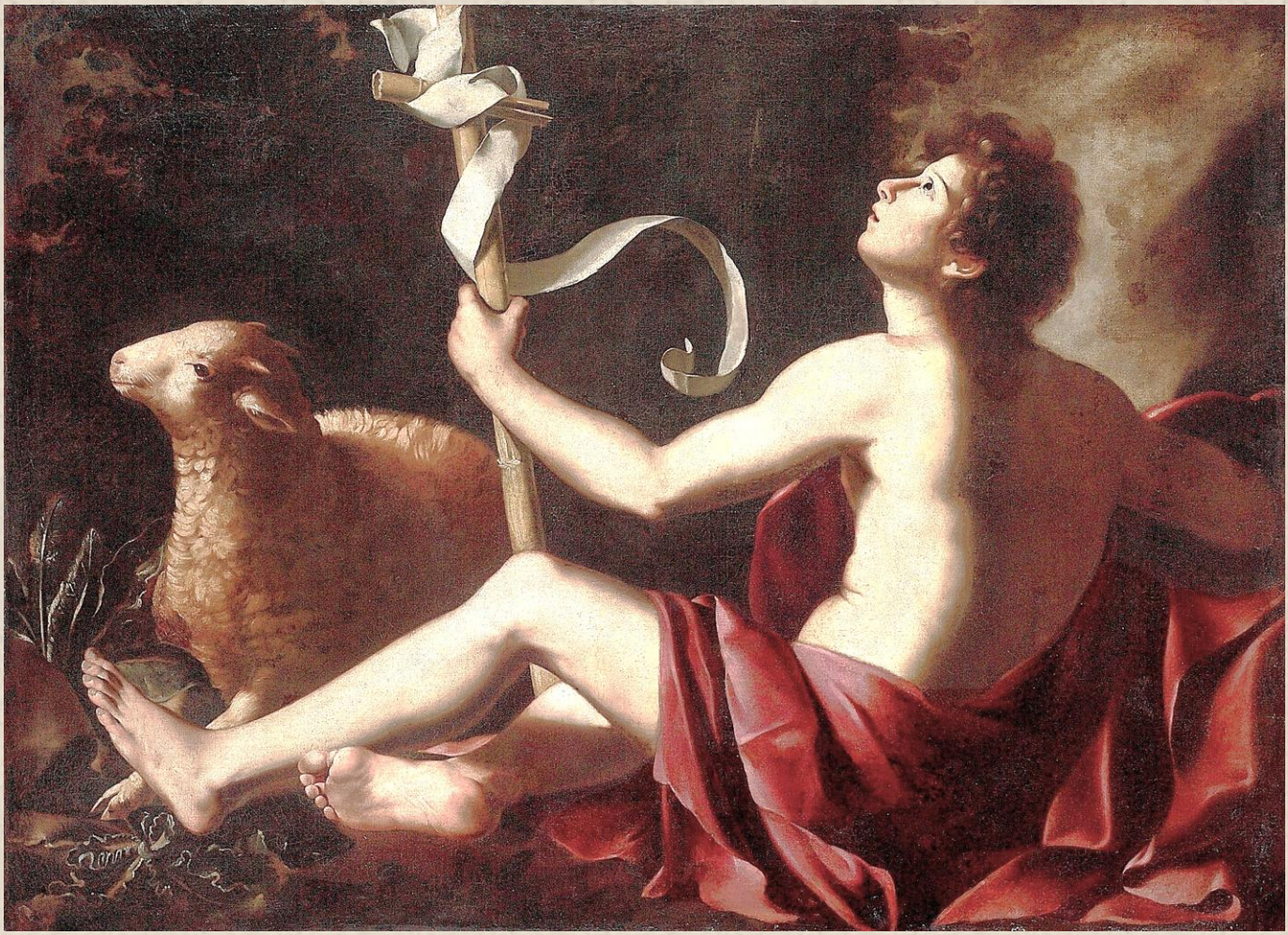
Esther

Esther before Ahasuerus by Artemisia Gentileschi (1628–1635)

Esther was a Jewish queen who risked her life to approach her husband, the king of Persia uninvited. Her boldness and strategic diplomacy successfully uncovered a plot to annihilate her people, ultimately saving the Jewish nation. They enjoy the Feast of Purim because of her actions. (Book of Esther)

These Old Testament examples show the strength, courage, service and sacrifice of our loving Father, who imbues His characteristics in those who acknowledge Him.

Lamb of God



Saint John the Baptist with the Lamb of God by Tommaso Salini (16th century)

But biblical signs and symbolism go well beyond the four creatures of God's throne.

John was standing with two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as he walked, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God! (John 1:35-36)

The lamb is the innocent sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin, representing Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

We are forgiven by faith in His amazing, merciful sacrifice without requirement for works.

I imagine most people are focused on the belief we must do something to earn our way into heaven. They want to believe they have earned forgiveness because of all the good they have done.

Please don't fall into this misconception. We will never measure up.

The Good Shepard

The Good Shepherd by James Tissot (1886-1894)

Christ was not only the lamb of God, He is the Good Shepard, and believers are His sheep.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (John 10:27)

And he spoke unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance. (Luke 15:3-7)

The Spirit of God

The Eternal Father by Paolo Veronese (1528-1588)

The Spirit of God is envisioned as a dove.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:16-17)

Sheep and Goats

Italianate Landscape with a Goat and Sheep Philipp Peter Roos (first half of 17th century)

Goats are associated with sin, rebellion, and separation from God. They are part of the Day of Atonement.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (Matthew 25:31)

The sheep will inherit the kingdom; the goats eternal punishment.

Wolves

Wolves by Géza Vastagh (1866-1919)

Wolves are associated with danger, deceit, false teachings, and destructive behavior.

The Lord speaking about Jerusalem at the time said, *Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, that they may get dishonest gain.* (Ezekiel 22:27)

Jesus said, *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.* (Matthew 7:15)

Be careful of those in power.

Horses

Death of Saul. 1 Samuel 31:5-6. Illustration by Gustave Doré (1891)
Colored by ChatGPT

Horses represent war as seen in Samuel and Joshua. *And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea-shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.* (Joshua 11:4)

And forget not the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, perhaps soon riding. (Revelation 6:1-8)

The Serpent

The Guilty Serpent by Gustave Doré (1866) colored by ChatGPT

The serpent will always be associated with Satan. (Genesis 3)

Great Red Dragon

Created by ChatGPT (2026)

As will the great red dragon.

And behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draws the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth. (Revelation 12:3-4)

The Lord said he had been the anointed cherub that covers (Ezekiel 28:14).

Does that mean other cherubim might be dragons too? I imagine so.

Perhaps they assume different forms as required.

Bread and Wine

Last Supper by Louis de Silvestre (1709–1710)

Symbolism abounds in Scripture. Bread and wine as His body and blood.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it; and He gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. (Matthew 26:26-28)

Peace and Security

A Vineyard, Gensano, Rome by Robert Scott Lauder (1833-1838)

The vine represents peace and security, brought by Jesus. You are its branches.

Jesus said, *I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* (John 15:1-2)

Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:25)

Foundation

Chestnut Tree of One Hundred Horses by Jean-Pierre Houël (1776-1779)

Roots represent foundations. Jesus is our foundation.

Jesus told John, *I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.* (Revelation 22:16)

Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. (Isaiah 53:1-2)

This tree is found on the slopes of Mount Etna. Its root is thousands of years old.

The Bright, Morning Star

Morning Star by Franciszek Żmurko (1898)

Jesus just told John*, I am… the bright, morning star,* (Revelation 22:16) a term once used of Lucifer before his fall from grace.

Once the most beautiful of all angels, reflecting the light of his Creator, Satan corrupted his wisdom because of his beauty. (Ezekiel 28:17)

Venus is also called the morning star. I think of Christ when I see it.

The Way

Zhangzi in Front of Waterfalls by an Unknown artist and date

This image is associated with the Chinese philosophy of the Dao, which is translated as The Way.

Christ said He was *the way, the truth, and the life.* (John 14:6) Interesting connection with the East.

Regarding all the water in the image, remember water cleanses. We wash in the Word. (Ephesians 5:26)

And Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life. (John 4:14)*

Sabbath Rest

Woodcut for "The Bible in Pictures" Seventh day, God Rests by Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1860)
Colored by ChatGPT

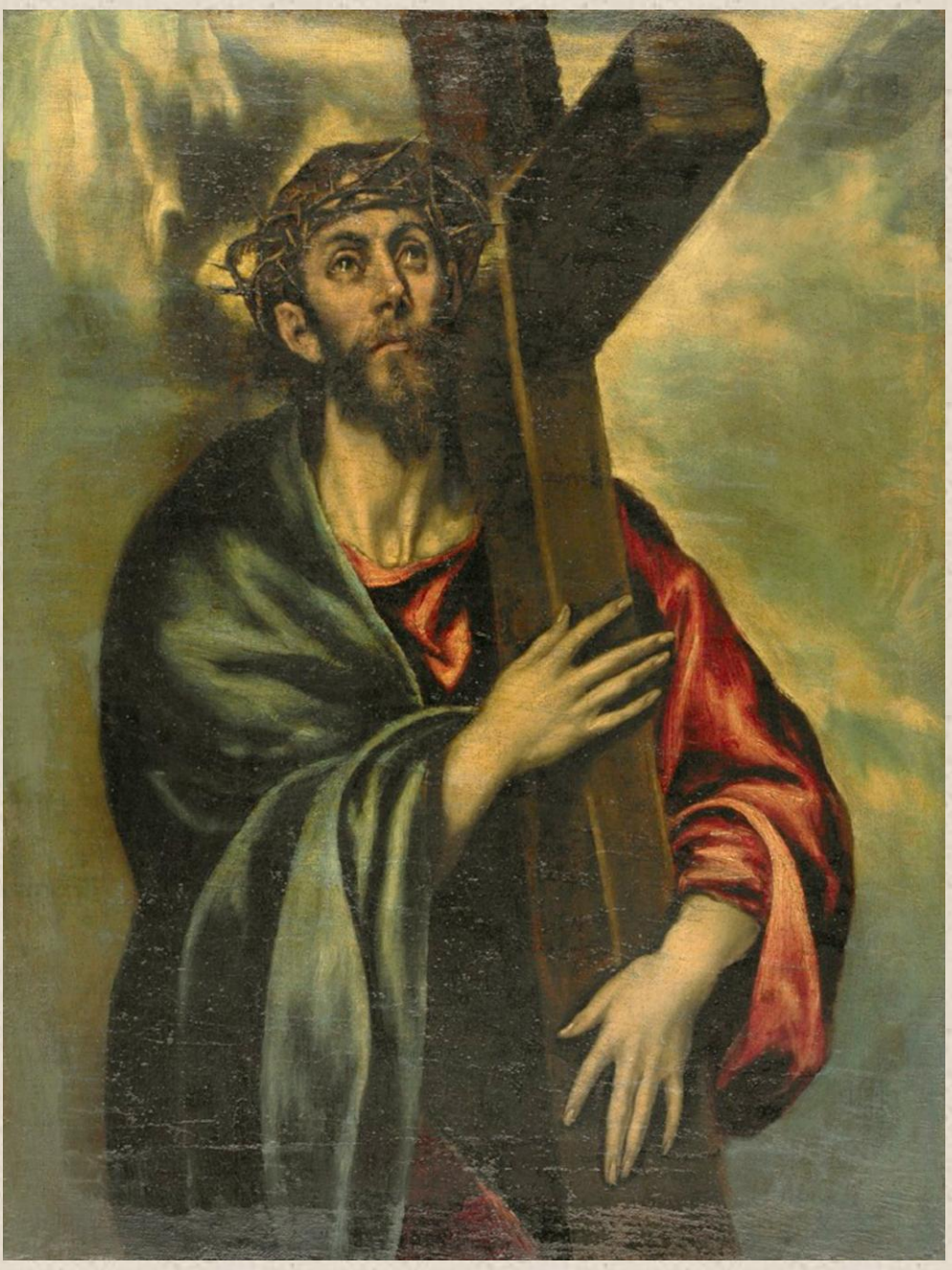
God set an example. *And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made*. (Genesis 2:1-3)

God made it a command. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.* (Exodus 20:8-11)

God made it a feast. *And Jehovah spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, The set feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My set feasts. Six days shall work be done: but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of work: it is a sabbath unto Jehovah in all your dwellings.* (Leviticus 23:1-3)

The rest was for our benefit and anticipated the work to be done by Christ. We are no longer under Law. Christ brought the age of grace.

Required Work



Christ Bearing the Cross by El Greco (1541–1614)

He told us. *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* (Matthew 11:28)

Because, *the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath,* (Matthew 12:8) and His sacrifice made payment for the sins of the whole world.

There remains therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. (Hebrews 4:9-10)

So simply *believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved*. (Acts 16:31)

Passover

The Signs on the Door by James Jacques Joseph Tissot (1896-1902)

To free the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery, God used Moses to bring ten plagues on the nation. The last of which was the death of the firstborn unless the Angel of Death observed the blood of a sacrificed lamb on their doorpost.

I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:12-13)

This became the second Feast of the Lord.

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, is Jehovah's Passover. (Leviticus 23:5)

So, for thousands of years, Hebrews have celebrated Passover on the 14th of Nisan.

Sacrifice

The Descent from the Cross by Peter Paul Rubens (1612-1614)

The Passover blood anticipated the shed blood of Christ, Who died for our sins on the 14th on Nisan. You are passed over for punishment because of His innocent, shed blood.

Unleavened Bread

The Last Supper print by Pierre Landry after Peter Paul Rubens (17th century)
Colored by ChatGPT

Unleavened bread is the third feast. *And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto Jehovah: seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread.* (Leviticus 23:6)

The house must be free of leaven for this feast. Leaven is a symbol of sin because it puffs up bread.

Jesus was free of sin which is why we eat unleavened bread at our Passover meal.

Firstfruits

The Emmaus Disciples by Abraham Bloemaert (1622)

The fourth feast is the Feast of Firstfruits, which celebrates the first harvest. It occurs the day after the sabbath after Passover. It is the same day as Christ rose from the dead, because He is the Firstfruits of those risen from the dead. He ate His first meal with His disciples in Emmaus. They did not recognize Him until He gave thanks for the bread and gave it to them.

Feast of Weeks

Pentecost by Jacopo Vignali (1648)
Sharpened by ChatGPT

The fifth Feast of the Lord is the Feast of Weeks, known in Judaism as Shavuot (meaning "weeks"). It is a major festival that occurs exactly seven weeks (50 days) after Passover. Agriculturally, it marks the wheat harvest, while spiritually, it commemorates the momentous day God gave the Torah to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai.

The Hebrews still celebrate it because they won't acknowledge that it was prophetic of Pentecost. One day they will see it.

Feast of Trumpets

Blowing the Trumpet at the Feast of the New Moon, illustration from the Holman Bible (1890)
Colored by ChatGPT

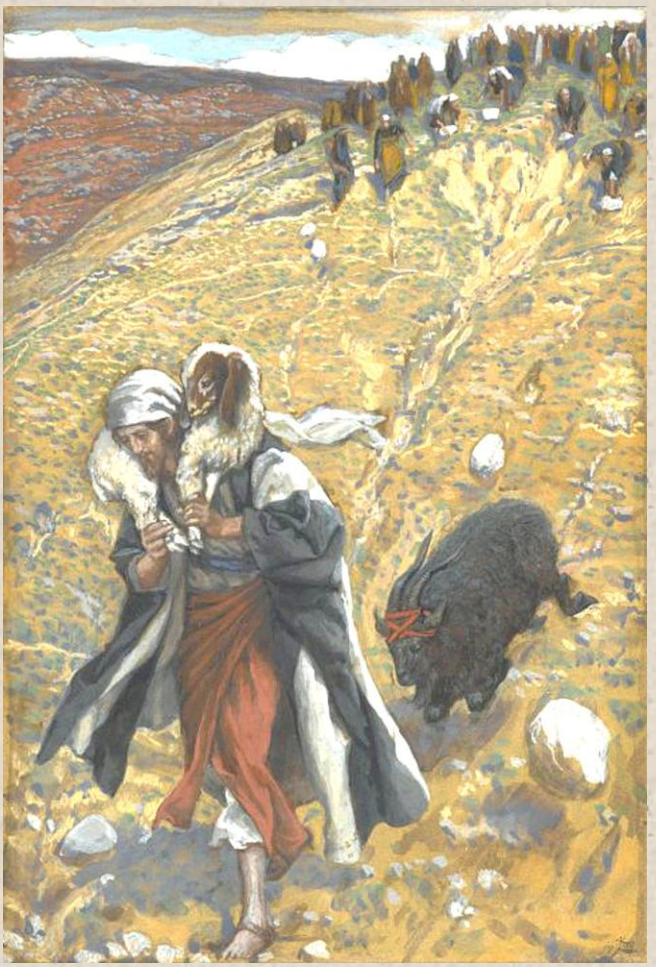
The sixth Feast of the Lord is the Feast of Trumpets. It marks the beginning of the Hebrew civil year and the first of the New Moon feasts. It corresponds to the seventh month of the religious calendar.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the Lord." (Leviticus 23:23-25)

Some reason this could be Christ's birthday, using the date of Gabriel's visit to Zechariah who was on duty in the Temple as part of the division of Abijah. After the angel announced His birth to the shepherds, *suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.* (Luke 2:13-14) Wonder if trumpets were sounded in Heaven.

Others expect this may prophesize the Second Coming of Christ.

Day of Atonement



The Scapegoat by James Tissot (1886-1894)

The seventh Feast of the Lord is the Day of Atonement.

Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering, but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel. (Leviticus 16:7-10) Here we find the scapegoat. Both represent Christ.

The Goat for the Lord: Sacrificed at the altar. Its blood is used to cleanse the Holy Place, satisfying God's justice and acting as a stand-in for the penalty of sin.

The Goat for Azazel (The Scapegoat): The High Priest lays his hands on this goat, symbolically transferring all the confessed sins and guilt of the people onto it. It is then led away into the wilderness, bearing our sins far from the community, remembered no more. The meaning of Azazel (Hebrew) is debated. Likely simply means the scapegoat based on the root words.

For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And their sins will I remember no more. (Hebrews 8:12) Also found in Hebrews 10:17, Jeremiah 31:34, and Isaiah 43:25.

Feast of Tabernacles

Jewish Family in a Sukkah from The National Library of Israel Sukkot Collection (1882)
Colored by ChatGPT

The last Feast of the Lord is The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths.

You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:42-43)

This was prophetic of Christ's dwelling with us in His first, and later His Second Coming.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Agape Love

God the Father and the Holy Ghost by Domenico Antonio Vaccaro (1700-1710)

Scripture reveals the amazing love God has for creation and the length He goes to redeem it. He demonstrates His characteristics through His Word and actions, and His Spirit transfers them to us.

Strength, service, sacrifice – characteristics He imbues in His people. He is majestic.

His Feasts tell of His redemptive plan, a plan fulfilled by His Son.

May the grace of the Lord be with you.

Divine Characteristics

The Four Evangelists by Peter Paul Rubens (1614)

Testimony to the Nations

Introduction of Christianity in Poland by Jan Matejko (1889)

Spread of the Faith

Resurrection

John 20

Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection by Alexander Ivanov (1835)

After He arose, He appeared to Mary first, asking her to report His return.

Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.

Christ came and went as He willed, and the Word was spread. We witness to what we know and you have His Spirit.

Ascension

Acts 1

Ascension of Christ by Pietro della Vecchia (1626)

To His apostles, He said:

It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and you shall <u>be My witnesses</u> both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had said these things, as they were looking, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as He went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you beheld Him going into heaven.

His words have passed through the generations, now we have the mantle.

Pentecost

Acts 2

The Pentecost by Juan Bautista Maíno (1612-1614)

Followers received the Holy Spirit ten days later at Pentecost, so they would begin to feel, think, and reason as their Father in heaven. You are welcomed to participate.

Jerusalem Council

Galatians 2

Jerusalem in the Time of Christ from The Pictorial Bible and Commentator (1878)
Colored by ChatGPT

In 49 A.D. the Council of Jerusalem was convened due to tension between Jewish and Gentile believers. Early church leaders determined non-Jewish converts did not have to follow the entirety of the Jewish Law, e.g. circumcision. To maintain unity and promote fellowship between Jewish and Gentile believers, they were asked to abstain from four specific practices: Meat sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality, things strangled (animals killed without properly draining the blood), and consuming blood.

At some point, Jews stopped converting, I imagine due to the righteousness they felt by trying to keep the Law.

Paul emphasized to the Galatians, *I would not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing.*

Apostolic Evangelism

1 Corinthians 15

John the Theologian Preaching on the Island of Patmos During the Bacchanalia
by Otto Friedrich Theodor von Moller (1856)

So, the Word was spread by travel and testimony. Here, exiled apostle John preaches at the pagan Festival of Bacchus sometime around 95-96 A.D.

But what exactly did they need to communicate?

Paul said, *Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except you believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures.*

Nicene Creed

Symbolum Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum (325 A.D.)
Icon depicting the First Council of Nicaea with ten men and a text of the Nicene Creed in Greek (2015)

The original Nicene Creed read as follows: We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate and became man, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and dead, And in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes (denounces).

First statement on the gospel, which all Christian denominations hold. Modified in 381 to affirm the Holy Spirit's divinity.

Council of Ephesus

Saint Cyril of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus by Francisco Meneses Osorio (1701)

The Council of Ephesus (431 A.D.), convened by Roman Emperor Theodosius II, was the third ecumenical council in Christian history. Its primary purpose was to resolve the Christological controversies surrounding the nature of Jesus Christ and to evaluate the teachings of Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Nestorius taught that Jesus had two separate, loosely connected natures (one human, one divine). Consequently, he argued that Mary was only the "Christ-bearer" (Christotokos), meaning she gave birth to Jesus the man, not the divine Word. Cyril, the Bishop of Alexandria, argued against Nestorius, asserting that Jesus is one single person with two perfectly united natures (divine and human) from the moment of conception.

The council rejected Nestorius's teachings, stripping him of his title and eventually sending him into exile. They also affirmed Mary as Theotokos, which translates to "God-bearer" or "Mother of God". This ruling cemented the doctrine that Jesus was fully God and fully human.

The council did not lead to immediate unity. It was convened hastily before bishops from Antioch (who supported Nestorius) arrived. This caused a severe schism and resulted in the formation of the Assyrian Church of the East. First major division.

Council of Chalcedon

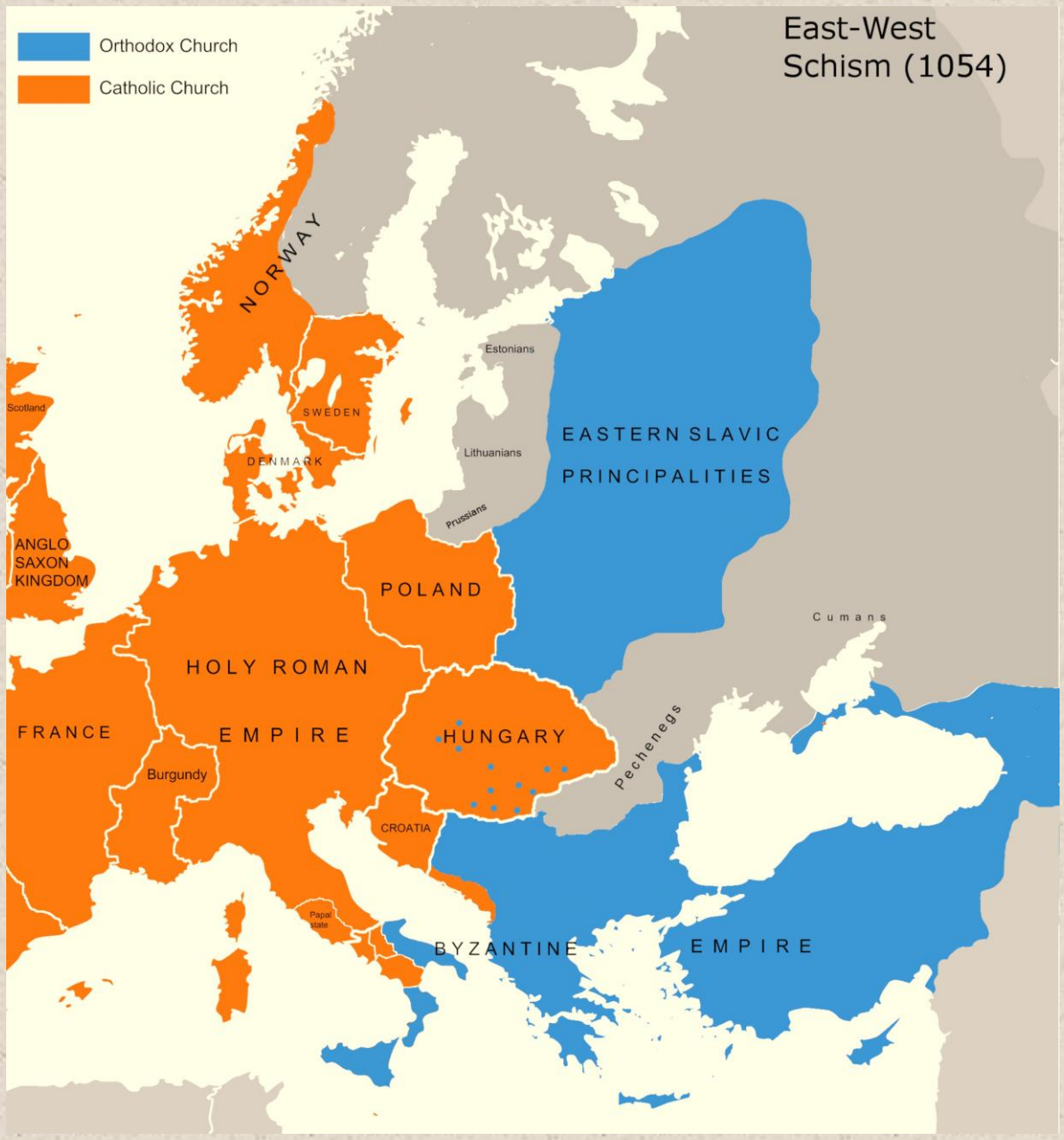
Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon by Vasily Surikov (1876)
Sharpened by ChatGPT

The Council of Chalcedon was an ecumenical council held in 451 A.D. near Constantinople. It is best known for issuing the Chalcedonian Definition, which established that Jesus Christ is one person in two distinct natures, fully God and fully human.

The council's definitions were not universally accepted. Those who rejected the two-nature doctrine broke away, forming the Oriental Orthodox Churches (which include the Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, and Ethiopian Orthodox traditions). The second major split.

Ephesus and Chalcedon dealt with the same issue, defining Christ’s nature, but came at it from opposite directions attempting to correct extremes.

The Great Schism



The Great Schism (1054) was the split between the Roman Catholic Church in the West and the Eastern Orthodox Church in the East. It occurred due to centuries of growing cultural, political, and theological differences.

The West believed the Pope in Rome held supreme authority. The East believed church leadership should be shared among regional patriarchs. The West spoke Latin and was influenced by Germanic culture; the East spoke Greek and was tied to the Byzantine Empire. Disagreements arose over minor details, such as whether to use leavened or unleavened bread during communion and the wording of the Nicene Creed.

The divide became official when the Pope's representatives and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated each other, mutually kicking one another out of the church. This was the third major split.

Reformation

Luther Posting his 95 Theses in 1517 Ferdinand Pauwels (1872)

The Protestant Reformation was a 16th-century religious and political upheaval that splintered Western Christianity. Sparked by reformers like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Henry VIII, it challenged the authority of the Catholic Church, leading to the birth of Protestantism and the reshaping of the socio-political landscape of Europe.

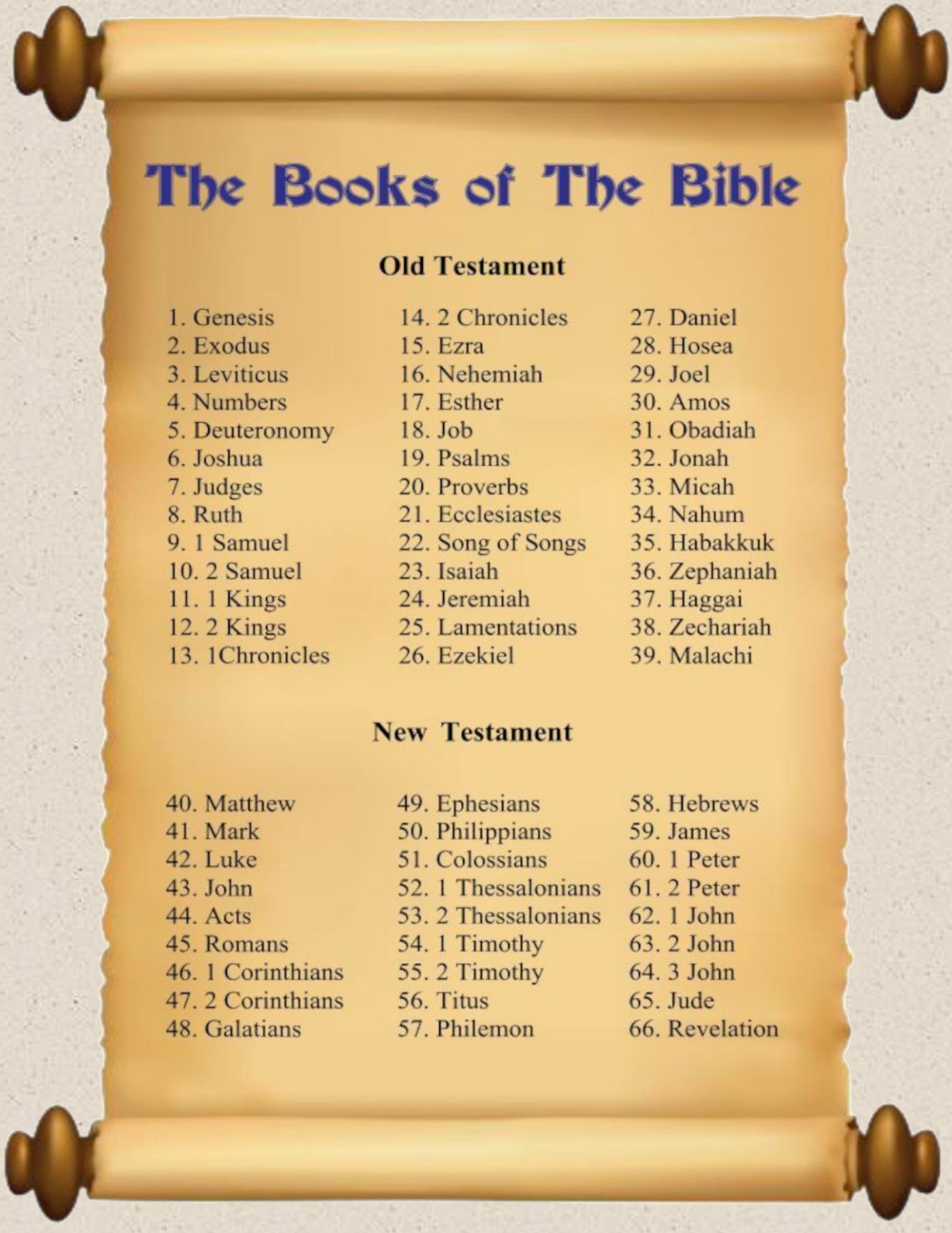
The Catholic Church was criticized for its vast wealth, political meddling, and the sale of indulgences (certificates reducing punishment for sins).

In 1517, Martin Luther famously nailed his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, protesting indulgences. He argued for salvation by faith alone and the authority of the Bible over church traditions.

This was the fourth major split in Christianity. Divisions continued leading to thousands of denominations.

Yet despite our divisions, disagreements, and cultural differences, we agree on the gospel, bear the name Christian, and share a common first canon.

First Canon



The Books of The Bible

Old Testament

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy
6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. 1 Samuel
10. 2 Samuel
11. 1 Kings
12. 2 Kings
13. 1Chronicles
14. 2 Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther
18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Songs
23. Isaiah
24. Jeremiah
25. Lamentations
26. Ezekiel
27. Daniel
28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum
35. Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah
37. Haggai
38. Zechariah
39. Malachi

New Testament

40. Matthew
41. Mark
42. Luke
43. John
44. Acts
45. Romans
46. 1 Corinthians
47. 2 Corinthians
48. Galatians
49. Ephesians
50. Philippians
51. Colossians
52. 1 Thessalonians
53. 2 Thessalonians
54. 1 Timothy
55. 2 Timothy
56. Titus
57. Philemon
58. Hebrews
59. James
60. 1 Peter
61. 2 Peter
62. 1 John
63. 2 John
64. 3 John
65. Jude
66. Revelation

Testimony

St. Augustine Arguing with Donatists by Charles André van Loo (1753)

We are the Lord's witnesses and expected to testify throughout the world. Christ, the Son of God whose sacrifice makes payment for the sins of mankind, proven by His burial and resurrection. Those fundamentals are agreed upon, though disagreements concerning the canon of Scripture endure.

St. Augustine voiced his viewpoint with great vigor and advocated for a larger canon that contained 73 books of Scripture and adopted by the Catholic Church. It was first promulgated by the Council of Rome in 382 AD and definitively finalized as a dogma at the Council of Trent in 1546.

The Protestants have the 66 books of the first canon which was conclusively defined by the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1647. Protestants call the seven additional Catholic books Apocryphal (meaning of unknown origin). They include Tobit, Judith, Baruch (including the Letter of Jeremiah), Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), Wisdom (of Solomon), 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees. The Catholic Bible, also includes longer books of Esther and Daniel.

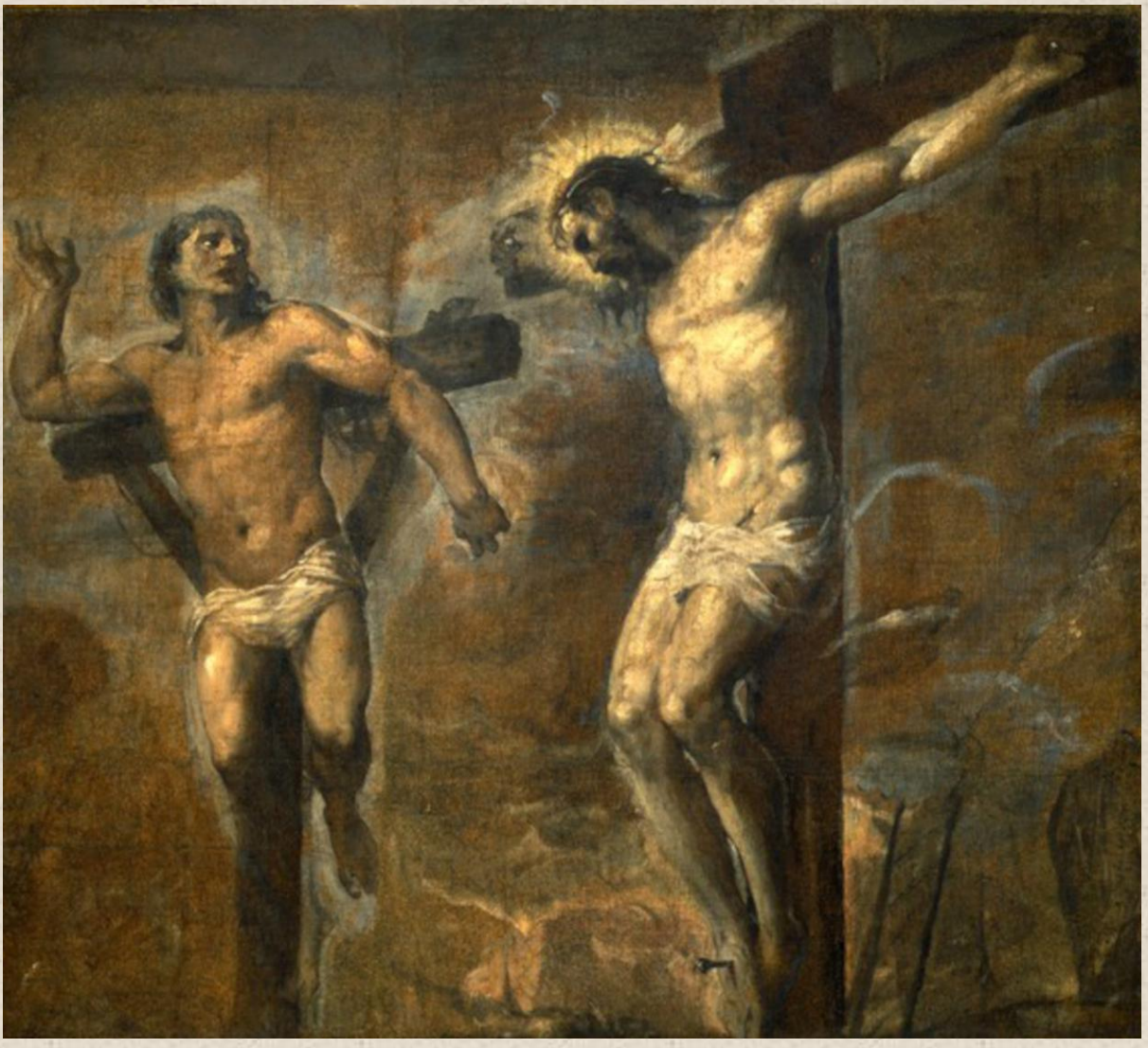
The Eastern Orthodox is slightly broader than the Catholic's Old Testament. In 367 St. Athanasius of Alexandria, in his 39th Paschal Letter, provided the first definitive list of the 27 New Testament books and an Old Testament canon, which became the standard for the Eastern Church.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's canon has 81 books, including the Book of Enoch and was standardized in the early 16th century with the adoption of the Fetha Nagast.

The Fetha Nagast (or Law of the Kings) is a foundational theocratic legal code that governed both civil and religious life in Ethiopia for centuries. Originally compiled in Arabic around 1240 by Coptic writer Abu'l-Fada'il ibn al-Assal, it blends biblical scripture, church canons, and Byzantine laws into a comprehensive moral and legal guide.

The Penitent Thief

Luke 23



Christ and the Good Thief by Titian (1566)

The story of the penitent thief demonstrates the shared fundament doctrine.

And one of the malefactors that were hanged railed on him, saying, Are not You the Christ? Save Yourself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing wrong. And he said, Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.

The penitent thief was the first redeemed, and simply required an acknowledgment of his need and Christ's role, innocence and sacrifice. The rest of Scripture provides applicable history, prophecy and fulfillment, instructive stories, and spiritual insight into the mind of God.

The Apocryphal books (additional canons) don't affect the efficacy of the gospel, and likely worth reading.

Apocryphal Books

The Chapel Of The Tablet, Axum, Ethiopia photo by A. Davey (2007)

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims to house the original Ark of the Covenant in the holy city of Axum. This sacred relic is reportedly secured inside the Chapel of the Tablet, adjacent to the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion.

And they hold the Ethiopian Bible, used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church which is one of the oldest and most comprehensive Christian canons in the world. It contains 81 books (46 in the Old Testament and 35 in the New Testament) and is notable for including ancient texts like Enoch and Jubilees.

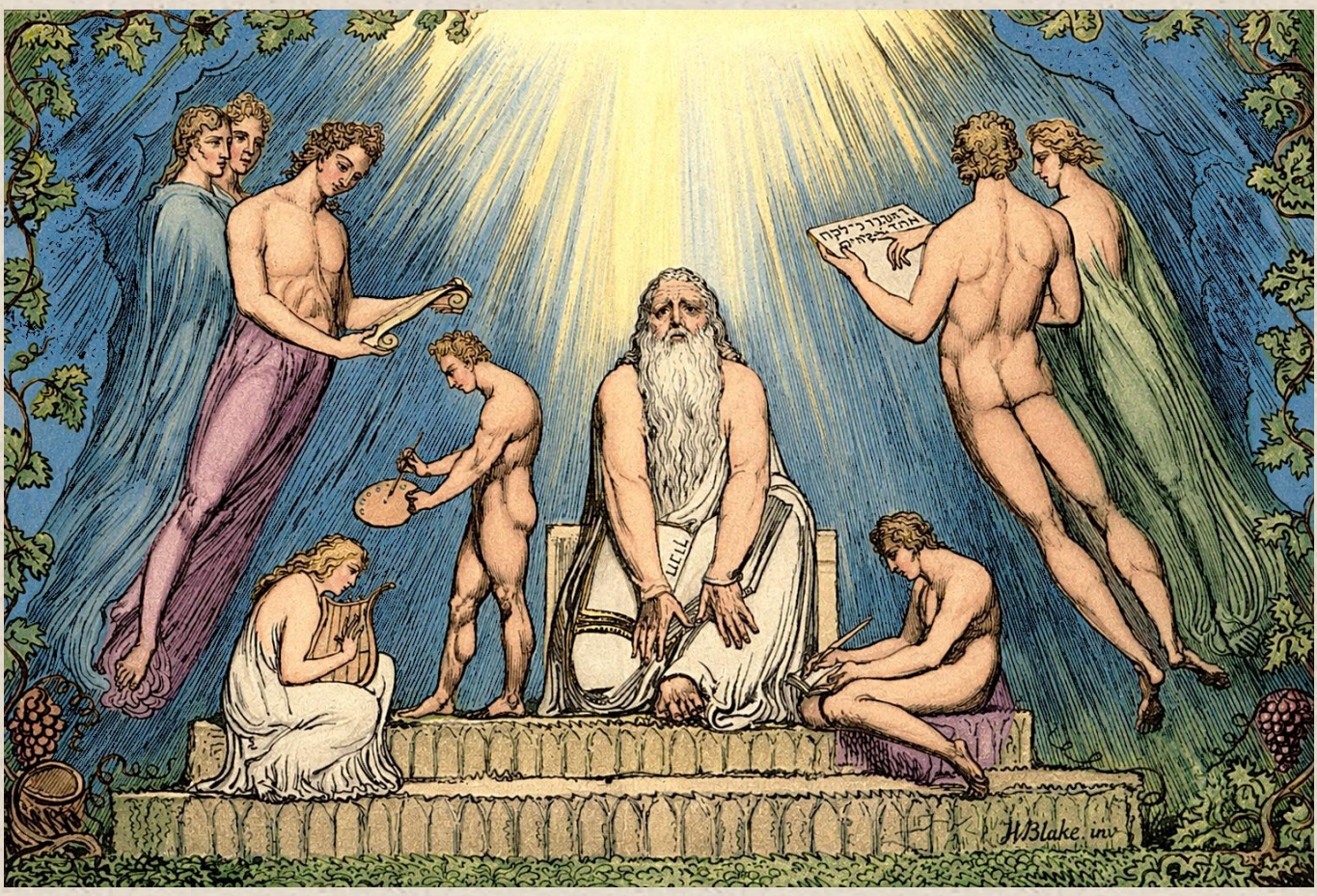
Here is a short summary of the Apocryphal books within.

Jubilees

Moses of Pisgah illustration from Pictures That Teach The Crown Series by Harold Copping (1920)

The Book of Jubilees is an ancient Jewish apocryphal text, dating to the 2nd century B.C. that retells biblical history from Creation to the Exodus. A revelation given to Moses by an angel on Mount Sinai, it divides time into 49-year periods called "Jubilees" to provide an exact chronology of events.

Enoch



Enoch Lithograph by William Blake (1807)
Colored by ChatGPT

The Book of Enoch is an ancient Jewish apocalyptic text, attributed to the biblical patriarch Enoch. It explores the origins of demons, the fall of the Watchers (angels) who procreated with human women, the creation of the Nephilim giants, and prophetic visions of the Messiah.

Prayer of Manasseh

Manasses in Vinculis by Bernard Picart (1733)
Sharpened by ChatGPT

The Prayer of Manasseh is a short, 15-verse penitential hymn from the Apocrypha. It is famously attributed to the wicked, idolatrous King Manasseh of Judah who, after being taken captive by the Assyrians, repented of his sins and sought God's mercy. Which he received.

Susanna

Susanna and the Elders by Peter Lely (1645-1655)

The story of Susanna, an apocryphal addition to the Book of Daniel, is an ancient tale of virtue, corruption, and divine justice. It highlights how a pious woman falsely accused of adultery is saved from execution by the wisdom of the young prophet Daniel.

Bel and the Dragon

Daniel and Cyrus before the Idol Bel by Rembrandt (1633)

Bel and the Dragon is an apocryphal addition to the Book of Daniel, consisting of two short tales that demonstrate the folly of idolatry. First, Daniel uses clever detective work to expose pagan priests who are secretly eating the food offered to the idol Bel. Then, he kills a giant sacred dragon by feeding it a fatal mixture of pitch, fat, and hair.

Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Young Men

Shadrach Meshach Abednego by Simeon Solomon (1863)

The Prayer of Azariah is an apocryphal text found in the Greek version of the Book of Daniel (typically inserted between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24). It recounts the moment Azariah (also known as Abednego) and his two friends stand unharmed in a fiery furnace, offering a profound prayer of repentance, communal confession, and plea for deliverance.

The "Song of the Three Young Men" (also known as the Song of the Three Holy Children) is an apocryphal addition to the Book of Daniel. It expands on the biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by detailing their prayer and thanksgiving while miraculously surviving King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace.

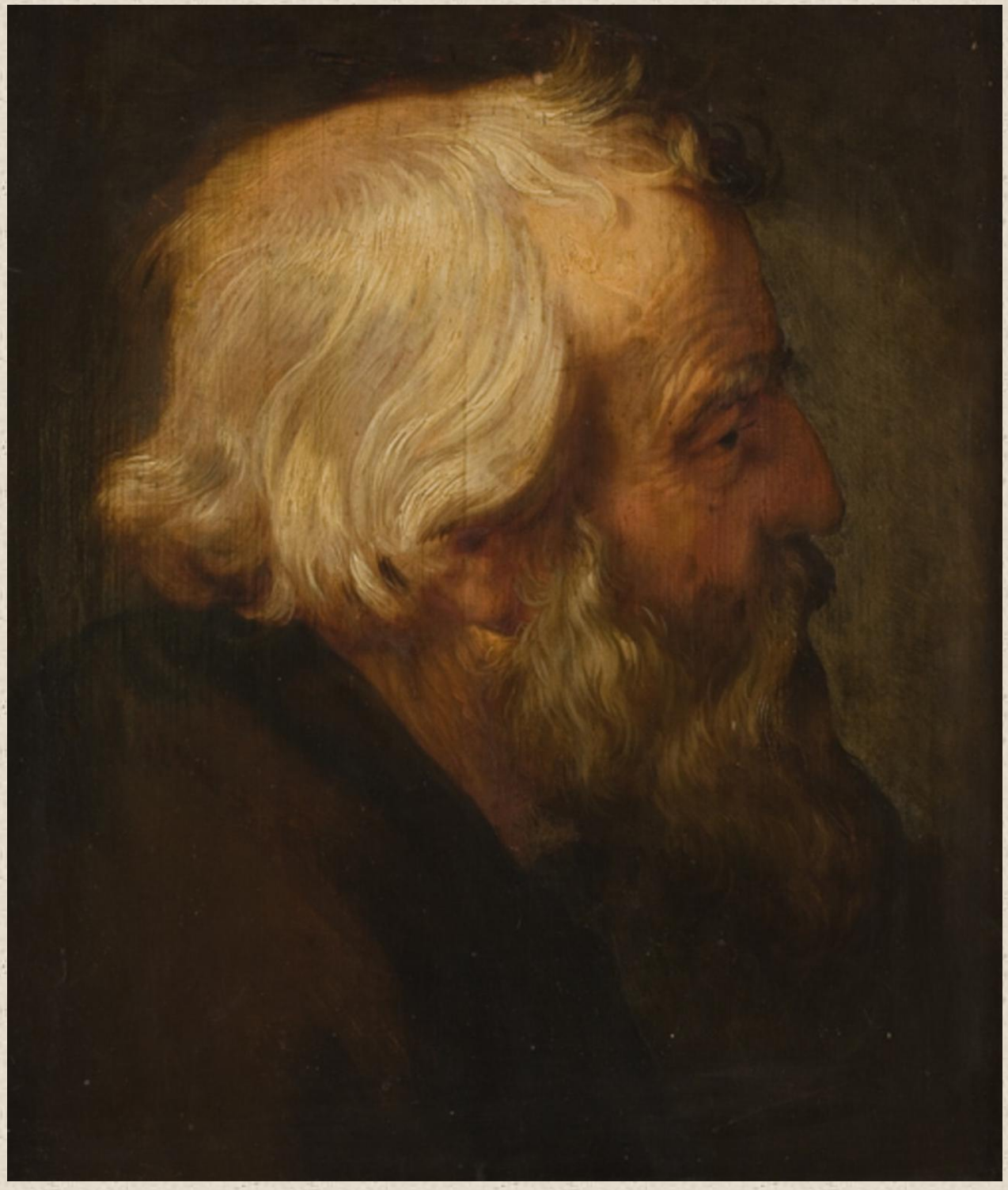
Clements Letters to the Corinthians

A Vision of the Trinity appearing to Pope Saint Clement by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1730-1735)

Written around 96 A.D. by Clement, Bishop of Rome, the First Epistle to the Corinthians is an urgent plea for unity. It addresses a crisis in Corinth where younger church members overthrew their duly appointed elders. Clement called for repentance, order and submission to church leaders.

The Second Epistle of Clement calls believers to repentance, purity, and steadfastness in faith.

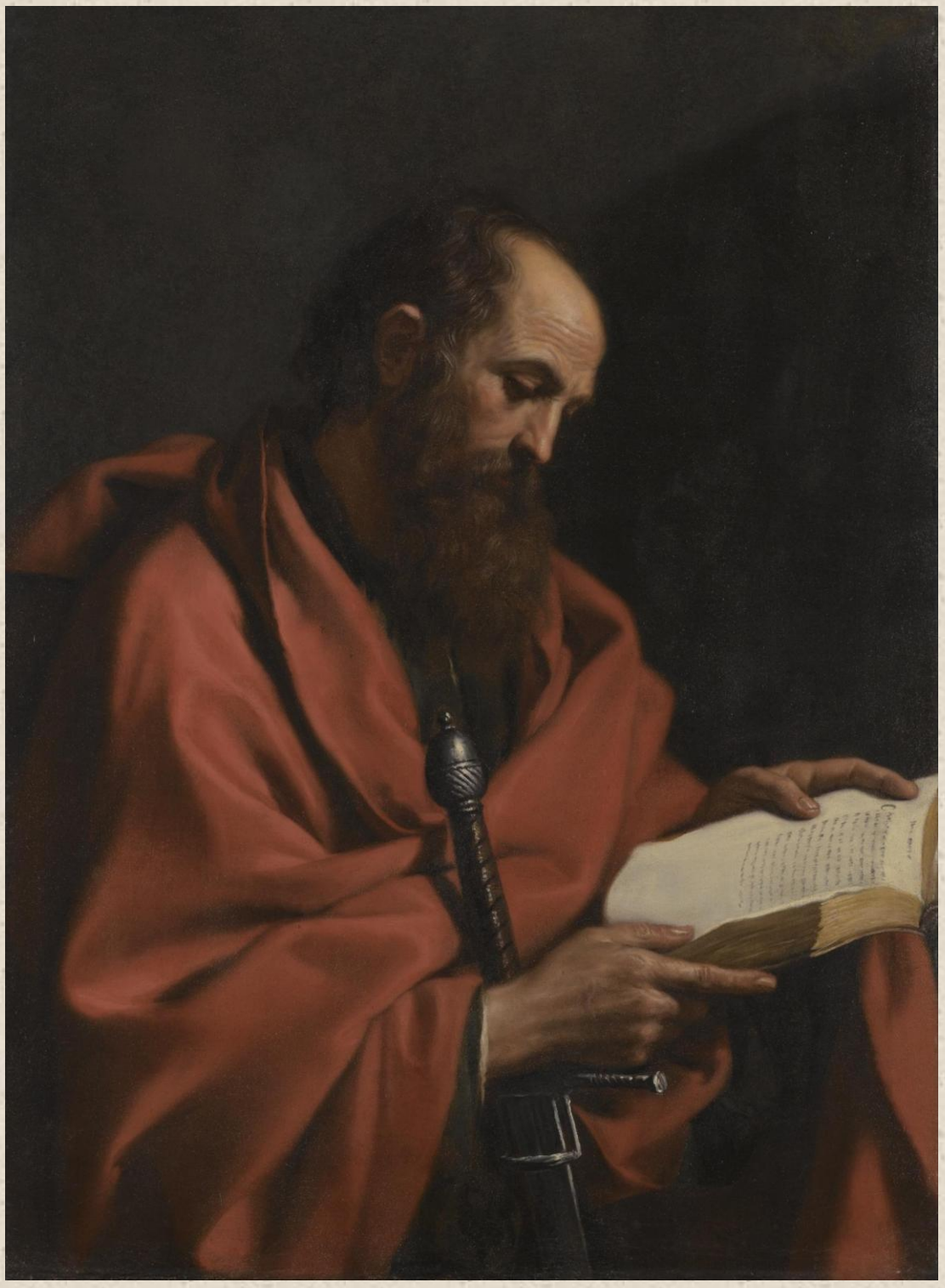
Apocalypse of Peter



The Apostle Peter by Peter Paul Rubens (1592-1640)

The Apocalypse of Peter is a discourse between Jesus and His disciples on the Mount of Olives. The text details the signs of the end times, the Second Coming, and the ultimate judgment of humanity. Its primary focus is revealing exactly how earthly sins translate into specific eternal punishments, followed by a brief glimpse of the righteous in heaven.

Apocalypse of Paul



Saint Paul by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (1591–1666)

The Coptic Apocalypse of Paul, discovered at Nag Hammadi, is a 2nd-century text. It exalts Paul as a premier apostle and details his visionary journey through the heavens. Guided by a divine child (the Holy Spirit), Paul bypasses lower realms and encounters cosmic beings, judgment scenes, and, ultimately, his fellow spirits in the tenth heaven.

Esdras

Esdras Preaches the Law by Julius Schnorr (2007)

The Apocryphal Books of Esdras are ancient Jewish and Christian texts closely related to the biblical Book of Ezra. While 1 Esdras primarily offers an alternate historical retelling of the return from Babylonian exile, 2 Esdras is an apocalyptic work focused on the end times.

Tobit

Tobit at his Son's Return by Jan Lievens (1630)

The Book of Tobit is an adventure tale and spiritual guide. It centers on two tormented, faithful Israelites: the blinded, charitable Tobit and his relative Sarah, whose seven successive husbands were killed by a demon each on their wedding night. God sends the archangel Raphael to guide Tobit's son, Tobias, who successfully cures his father and marries Sarah.

Judith

Judith Beheading Holofernes by Caravaggio (1598-1599)

The Book of Judith is an ancient story about a devout, daring widow named Judith who saves her besieged Jewish hometown of Bethulia from the invading Assyrian army by seducing, decapitating, and defeating their general, Holofernes.

Additions to Esther

Haman and Mordecai by Paul Alexander Leroy (1884)

The Additions to the Book of Esther are six passages found in the Greek Septuagint version of the Bible but absent in the traditional Hebrew text. Added in the 2nd century B.C., they explicitly introduce God into the story and provide the text for official decrees.

The Book Of Meqabyan

Ethiopia - Lake Assale photo by Thomas Fuhrmann (2019)

The Book of Meqabyan (Ethiopian Maccabees) is a unique apocryphal text from the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Bible. It is totally different from the Greek Maccabees. Written in three parts, it highlights unwavering faith, the fight against false idols, the origins of the Devil, and the hope of resurrection.

Wisdom

The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon by Sir Edward John Poynter (1890)

The Apocryphal Book of Wisdom (of Solomon) is a vital Jewish text written in the 1st century B.C. to guide the faithful through cultural crises. It is structured into three sections: an exhortation to righteousness, a praise of wisdom, and a reflection on how wisdom shaped Israel's history.

Sirach

Bowyer Bible, Headpiece to Ecclesiasticus by Phillip Medhurst
Colored by ChatGPT

The Book of Sirach (also known as Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus) is an ancient collection of wisdom poetry, ethical maxims, and practical advice. Written in Hebrew around 180–175 B.C. by the sage Jesus ben Sira, it aims to guide readers in living righteous, faithful lives according to the Torah while resisting pagan Greek influence.

The Ascension of Isaiah

Prophet Isaiah of Guercino (1650)

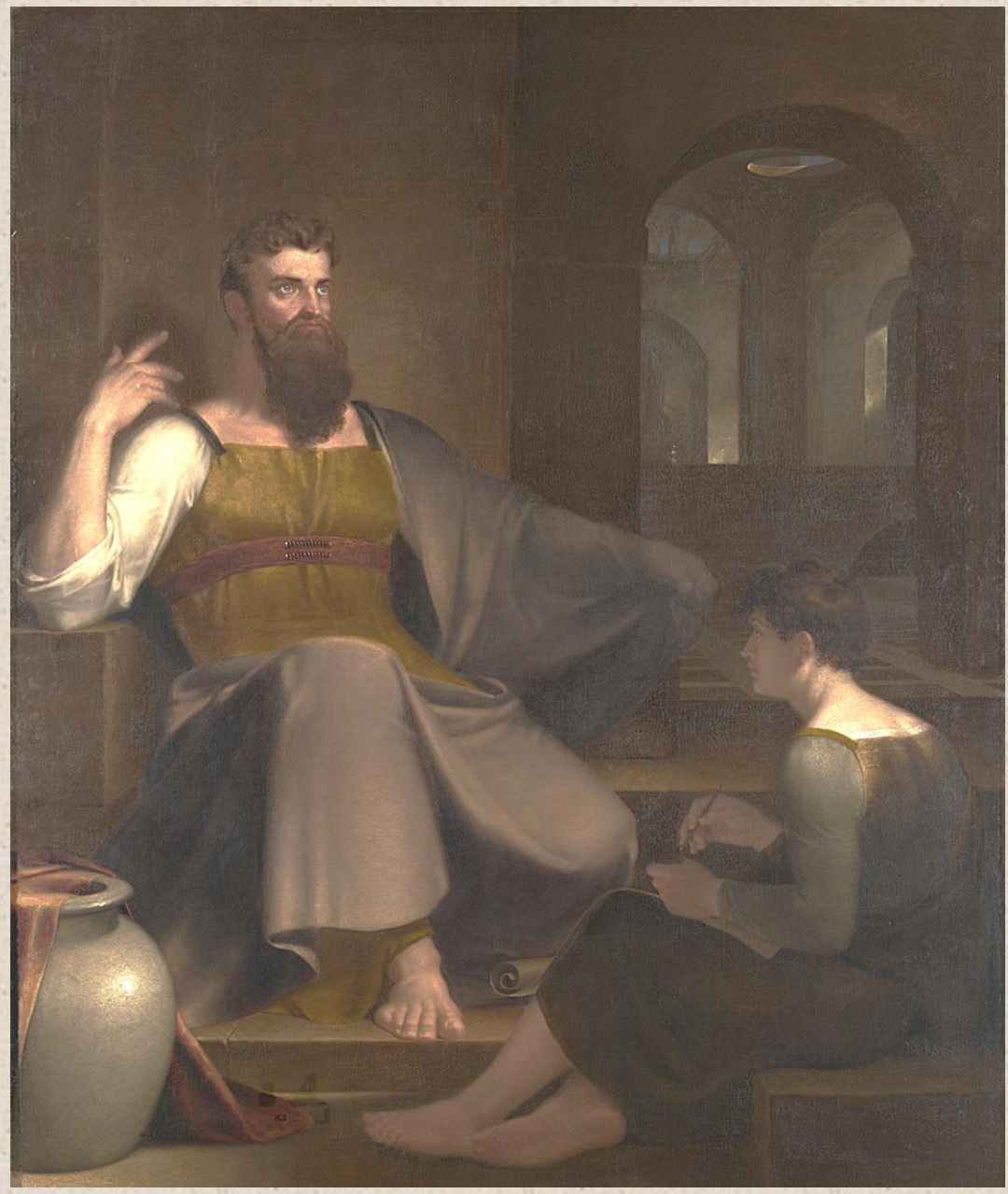
The Ascension of Isaiah is an ancient apocryphal text combining Jewish and early Christian traditions. It details the prophet Isaiah's martyrdom under King Manasseh and his visionary journey through the seven heavens, where he witnesses the secret descent, crucifixion, and ascension of Jesus.

Jeremiah

Prophet Jeremiah (Sistine Chapel ceiling) by Michelangelo (1508-1512)

The Epistle of Jeremiah, an Apocryphal book (also known as the Letter of Jeremiah) is a warning from the prophet Jeremiah to the exiled Jews in Babylon. Its core message is a scathing, satirical critique of pagan idolatry, urging the exiles to remain steadfast in their monotheistic faith.

Baruch



Jeremiah Dictating His Prophecy of the Destruction of Jerusalem to Baruch the Scribe
by Washington Allston (1866)

The Book of Baruch is a deuterocanonical Jewish text attributed to the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. It is included in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles but categorized as apocrypha by Protestants and Jews. The book is a poetic reflection on the Babylonian exile, offering themes of confession, wisdom, and future restoration.

Deuterocanonical is a term used to describe texts which were included in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) but are not part of the standard Hebrew canon. The term was coined in the 16th century by theologian Sixtus of Siena to distinguish them from the "protocanonical" (first canon) books, which were universally accepted from the beginning.

4th Baruch

Jeremiah Seated in the Ruins of Jerusalem by Eduard Bendemann (1837)

4th Baruch (also known as the Paraleipomena Jeremiou, meaning "things omitted concerning Jeremiah") is an ancient Jewish and Christian Apocryphal text. Written around the late 1st or early 2nd century A.D. It is a companion to the Book of Jeremiah, offering a unique, mystical account of the Babylonian exile.

Psalms 151

David and Goliath by Guillaime Courtois (1650-1660)

Psalm 151 is a short, autobiographical hymn attributed to King David, celebrating his humble origins and his victory over Goliath. While not included in the standard Protestant or Catholic canon, it appears in Eastern Orthodox Bibles and was discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We need not accept these Apocryphal texts, but knowing that some have, for centuries, makes them of interest and worth reading, in my estimation.

Time of the End

Matthew 24

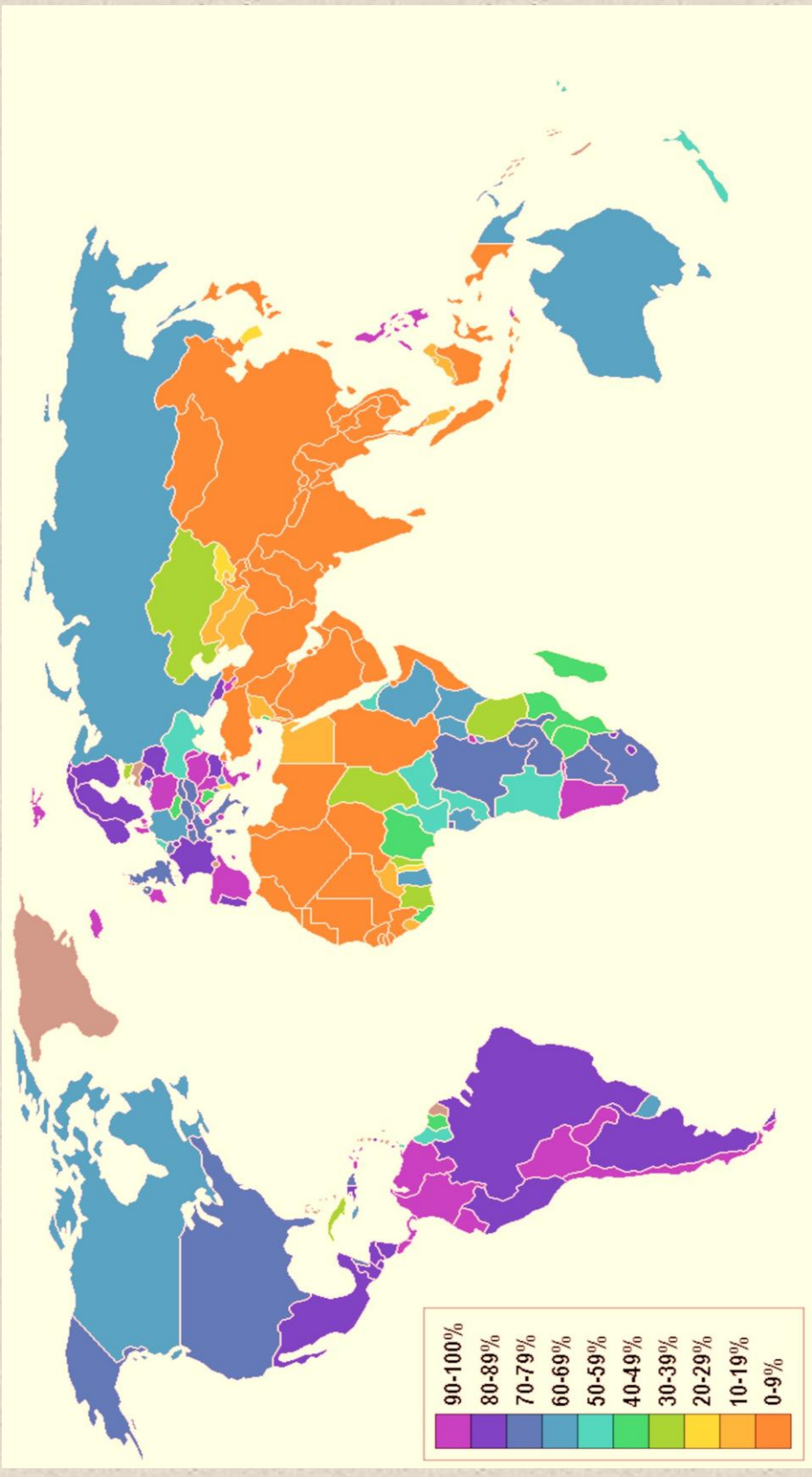
The Exhortation to the Apostles by James Tissot (1886-1894)

As Jesus sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?

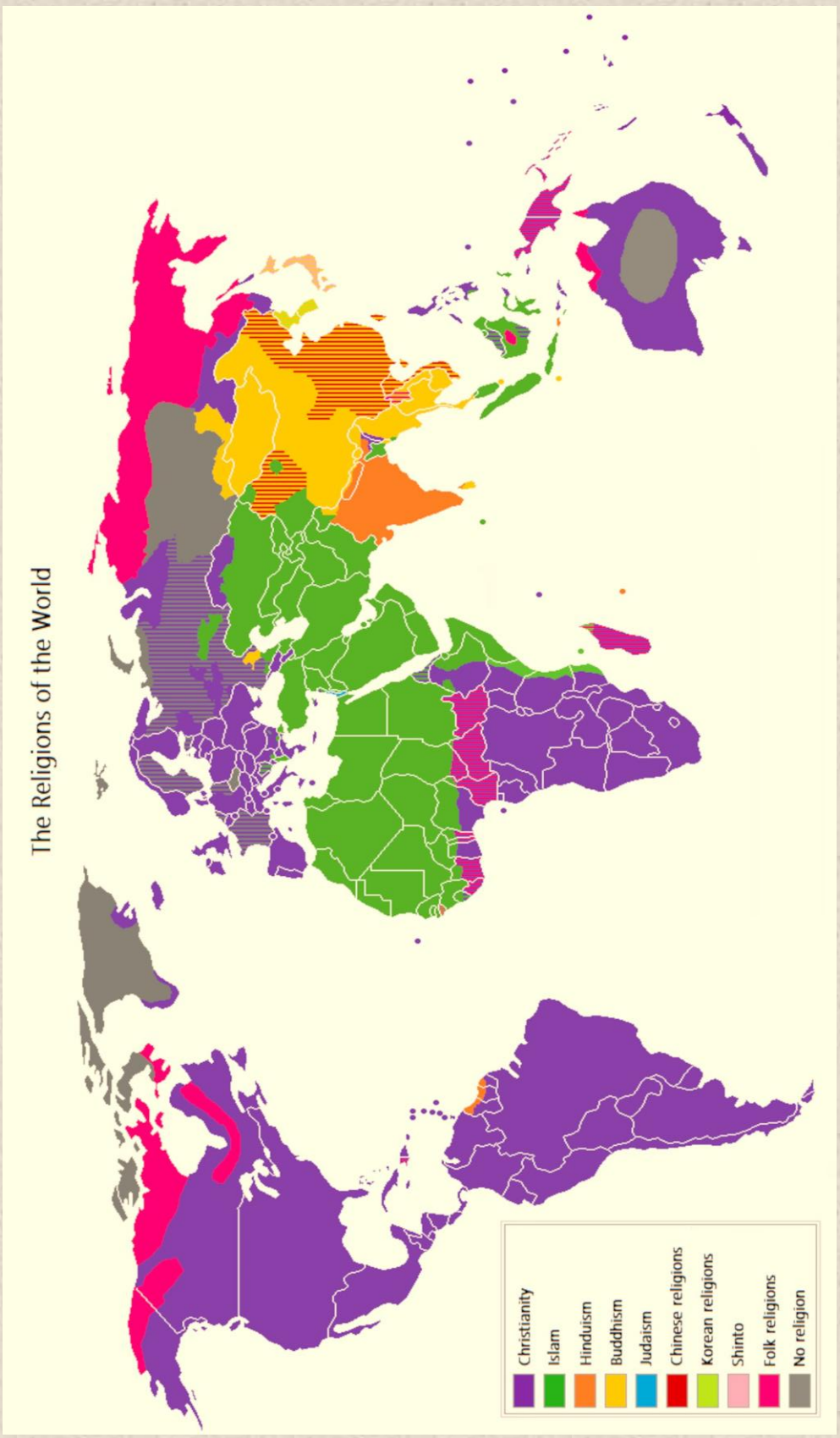
Jesus replied, *this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.*

How far has it been preached? How close are we?

Christianity percentage by country from Pew Research (2008)



Major religions distribution by Usergreatpower (2009)



Evangelism

The Ship Young America at Sea by Antonio Jacobsen (1915)

North Africa, the Middle East, and most of Asia adhere to Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism, but their nations have been reached. Christians live in every country.

Missionary organizations are active. Pioneers is in Africa and Asia. The International Mission Board, run by the Southern Baptists, is active in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Mission to the World is a global mission-sending agency of the Presbyterian Church in America. There are many more with long or short-term missionary opportunities for all.

If you have a passion for outreach, pursue it. We are tasked to be witnesses

Christianity in China

Trinity Catholic Church in Dali Diocese photo by Xin (2015)

Trinity Church was built between 1927 and 1931 by French missionaries in Southwestern China, now a communist nation.

The Church of the East arrived in China in the 7th century. Christians are estimated to be about five percent of the population, while Buddhism, Folk religions influenced by Confucianism, and Agnosticism predominate.

We estimate China has about 66,000 registered churches.

Christianity in Vietnam

Tan Huong Church, Kon Tum City, Viet Nam photo by Thai Truong Giang (2016)

Vietnam, a communist nation, has approximately 8 to 10 million Christians, making up about 7.5% to 9.8% of the country's population. Estimates indicate there are over 6,000 official church buildings across the country.

Christianity was introduced to Vietnam in the 16th century via European maritime traders and Catholic missionaries. Portuguese, Spanish, and French Jesuits established permanent missions, spreading the faith, developing the Romanized Vietnamese alphabet, and enduring centuries of persecution before French colonization institutionalized the religion.

Christianity in Thailand

Santa Cruz Church in Bangkok, Thailand photo by Philip Nalangan (2006)

Christians make up approximately 1% to 1.2% of Thailand's population, which amounts to about 400,000 to 500,000 adherents. There are an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Christian churches and congregations operating across the country.

Christianity was introduced to Thailand in two major waves: Roman Catholicism brought by Portuguese traders and missionaries in the mid-1500s, followed by Protestantism spearheaded by American and British missionaries in the early 19th century.

Christianity in India

View of the west end of St John's Church Calcutta, showing houses fronting onto the churchyard and the Rohilla monument by Amelia Rebecca Prinsep (1830)

The Apostle Thomas arrived in India during the first century. The faith grew slowly in this predominately Hindu nation. Colonization by the British increased Christian adherence. Here the artist painted her brothers' homes across from St. John's Church. They were an Anglo-Indian family.

Christians make up only two percent of the population and we estimate about 35,000 churches are in India.

Christianity in Iran

Saint John Church of Sohrol, a 5th or 6th century Armenian Catholic church in Sohrol, Iran
photo by Farzin Izaddoust dar (2019)

Christianity first arrived in the Persian Empire via early trade routes and the Silk Road. According to ancient tradition, the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew preached in the northwestern regions of Iran, and the Book of Acts even records that Parthians, Medes, and Elamites (ancient peoples of Iran) were present in Jerusalem at the first Pentecost.

Estimates for the Christian population in Iran, 1-2 percent, range from roughly 300,000 to over 1 million. While there are about 300 to 650 physical church buildings, they are largely historic sites for recognized ethnic minorities. Most Christians in Iran are converts who practice their faith in secret house churches to avoid government persecution from radical Islamists.

Christianity in Egypt

A Coptic Orthodox Christian Monastery in Lower Egypt contributed by Lollylolly78 (2007)

The Monastery of Saint Bishoy is among the world's oldest operating monasteries. Founded in the late 4th century, this sacred site stands in Wadi El Natrun, Egypt, northwest of Cairo. It's recognized as the most famous monastery of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria.

Christians are roughly ten percent of the population in Egypt. We estimate there are about 6,000 churches and monasteries there.

Restrictions

Arabian oryx crossing desert dunes in the Uruq Bani Ma'arid Reserve, Saudi Arabia
The country's first natural UNESCO World Heritage Site photo by the Saudi Press Agency (2025)

Saudi Arabia is famously the only country in the world that prohibits the existence of any official, public Christian churches. Because it is the birthplace of Islam and home to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the government strictly enforces Islamic law, making public non-Muslim worship illegal and the building of churches impossible. Recall in 2001, 15 of the 19 9/11 terrorists were from Saudia Arabia.

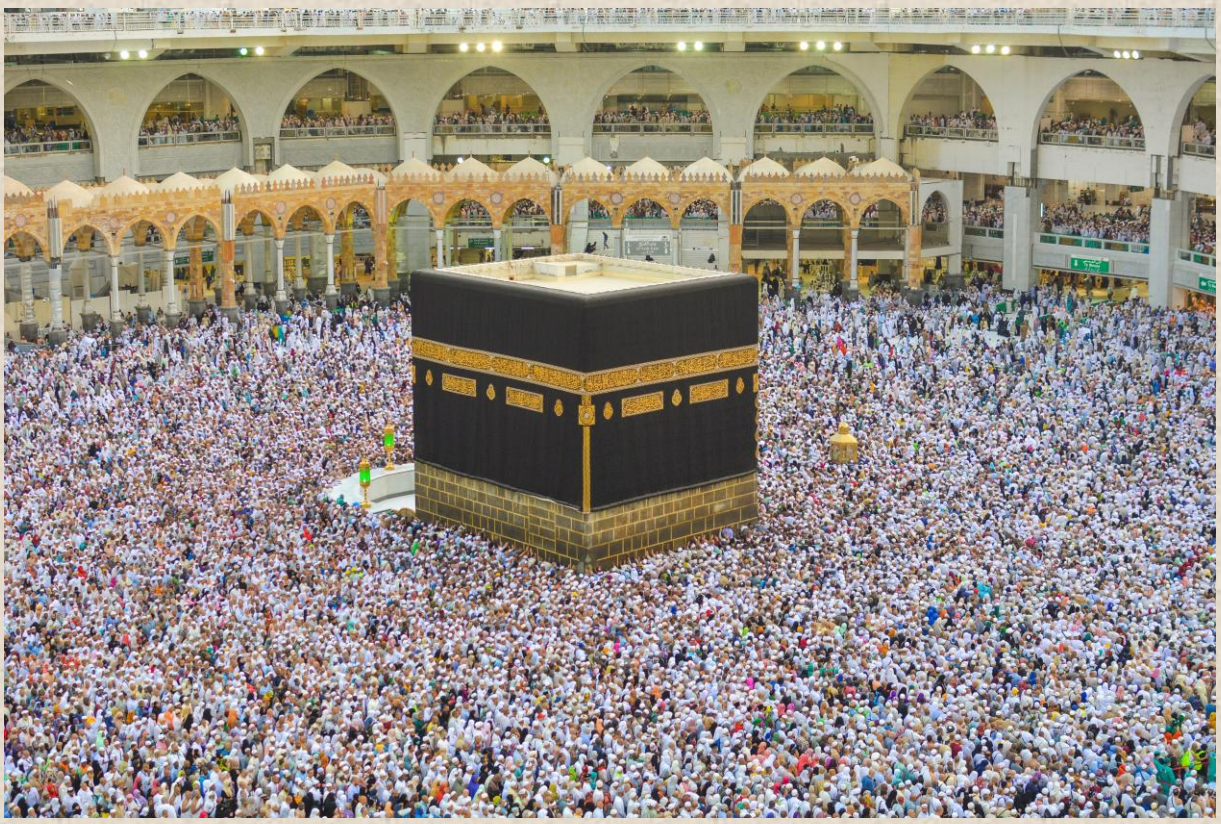
Other nations with essentially zero churches include:

The Maldives**:** Freedom of religion is restricted to the point that only Sunni Muslims can be citizens, and there are no official churches.

Afghanistan & Somalia: Due to strict religious laws and extreme persecution, there are no operating public church buildings, and Christians must practice strictly underground.

North Korea: While there are a few state-controlled buildings in Pyongyang designed to give the illusion of religious tolerance, they lack genuine congregations and clergy.

Islam



The Kaaba during Hajj photo by Adli Wahid (2018)

The largest barrier to the spread of Christianity is Islam. Why?

After Christianity was legitimized by the Roman Empire, it spread exponentially from 40,000 in 150 A.D to 11 million in 600.

The Quran was written between 610 and 632 to deny Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Surah An-Nisa 4:171 states Allah is only One God. Glory be to Him! He is far above having a son! Surah An-Nisa 4:157 claims Christ made no sacrifice, someone who resembled him was crucified.

No Son – No sacrifice – No Christianity. And Islam will forbid it whenever possible. Satan hates Christians and Jews.

The third holiest place in Islam is Jerusalem, because Mohammed took his famous Night Journey from al-Masjid al-Haram (in Mecca) to al-Masjid al-Aqsa (supposedly in Jerusalem) in 621. But Masjid al-Aqsa didn't exist on the mount as a simple structure until 638 and Jerusalem isn't even mentioned in the Quran.

In response, some claim al-Masjid al-Aqsa simply means the furthest worship location from Mecca, regardless of religion. The furthest known active Christian church from Mecca was likely the Church of St. Martin in Canterbury, England. Functioning continuously since before 597 A.D.

The Muslims claim Abraham originally built the Kaaba, evidenced by his supposed footprints in stone viewable in the small golden structure just to the right of the Kaaba in the image.

The Foundation Stone

Foundation stone in the interior of the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem by Carl Haag (1859)

After the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 AD, the Temple Mount was left largely in ruins. Over the following centuries, the site served as a Roman pagan sanctuary, was neglected or used as a garbage dump by Byzantine Christians, and eventually became the home of major Islamic holy sites.

Following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the 630s, the Umayyad Caliphate transformed the neglected esplanade into a major Islamic holy sanctuary. They constructed the Dome of the Rock (completed in 691 A.D.) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (early 8th century).

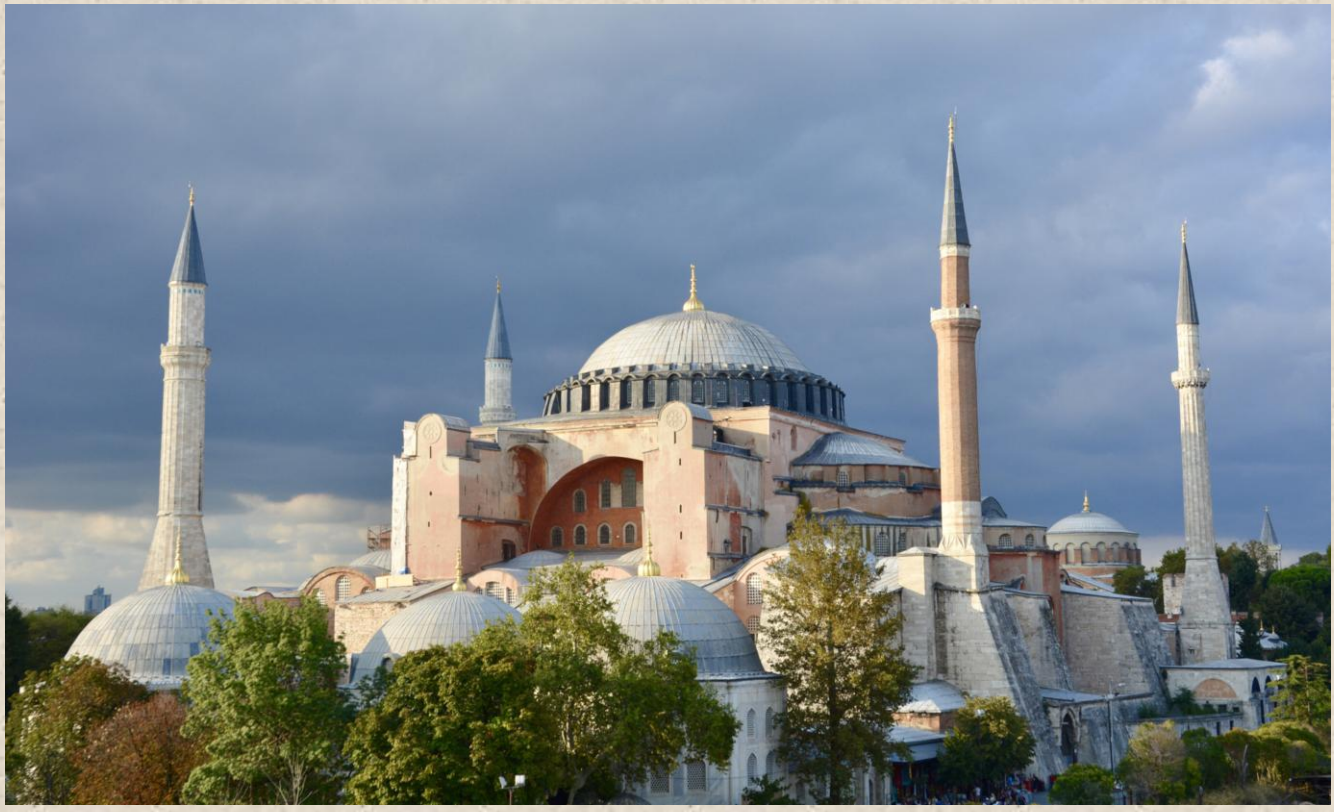
The Dome covers what some call the Foundation or Holy Stone. The Jews believe this was where Abraham made sacrifice and their Temple stood.

I imagine the Muslims took the Temple mount to fabricate Al-Aqsa, prevent another Jewish Temple, and demonstrate their superiority.

The Hadith says, The last hour will not come before the Muslims would fight the Jews... so Jews would hide behind rocks and trees. Then the rocks and trees would call: oh Muslim, oh servant of God! There is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.

This is why the Muslims hate the Jews and never regret violence towards them or others.

Hagia Sophia



Hagia Sophia photo by Adli Wahid (2014)

Hagia Sophia was the Byzantine Cathedral of Constantinople (360-1453) during the Great Schism in 1054, the formal split between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. It was the world's largest cathedral for nearly a thousand years and a profound influence on Orthodox Christian architecture.

The Great Schism of 1054 divided Christianity into Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and was primarily caused by a power struggle over papal authority, deep-rooted theological disagreements, and diverging cultural, political, and linguistic differences between the Latin West and Greek East.

Muslims gained control of the Hagia Sophia in 1453 when the Ottoman Empire, led by Sultan Mehmed II (Mehmed the Conqueror), captured Constantinople. Upon taking the city, the Sultan immediately converted the centuries-old Eastern Orthodox cathedral into an imperial mosque. They have held it ever since.

It was converted into a museum for a time (1935–2020), but again serves as an active mosque, and viewed as showing Islamic superiority.

Islam will oppose Jews and Christians always.

Islamic Expansion

The Entrance of Caliph Umar (637) into Jerusalem from Granger (19th century)

Jerusalem is supposed to be the site where the Prophet Muhammad miraculously traveled to during his Night Journey and ascended to heaven to meet with God as recorded in Surah Al-Isra in the Quran..

Umar needed the city to make the Night Journey story believable.

Muslims controlled Jerusalem for nearly 1,200 years. Their rule began in 638 and lasted until the city was captured by British forces in 1917 during World War I, with two interruptions during the Crusades.

They still control the Temple Mount. This is the Lord's city and Jews, Christians, and Muslims will wrestle for it until He returns.

In the meantime, read the Word, promulgate your testimony, spread the gospel, and watch.

The Silver Cord

Ecclesiastes 12

King Solomon in Old Age (colorized) by Gustave Doré (1866)

Solomon wrote - *<u>Remember your Creator</u> in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high, and terrors shall be in the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goes to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets: before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it.*

The silver cord is severed at death releasing the spiritual from the physical. Be alert, read the Word, and testify until then!

Valley of the Shadow of Death

Psalm 23

The Valley of the Shadow of Death by John Martin (1829)
Colored by ChatGPT

Remember,

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul: He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You art with me; Your rod and Your staff comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You have anointed my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Evangelism

The Four Evangelists by Joachim Beuckelaer (1567)

Revelation Nearing

Angel Sounding a Trump by Timothy Cole (1888)
Colored by ChatGPT

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Italics – Guided by the English Standard Version.

He's Coming

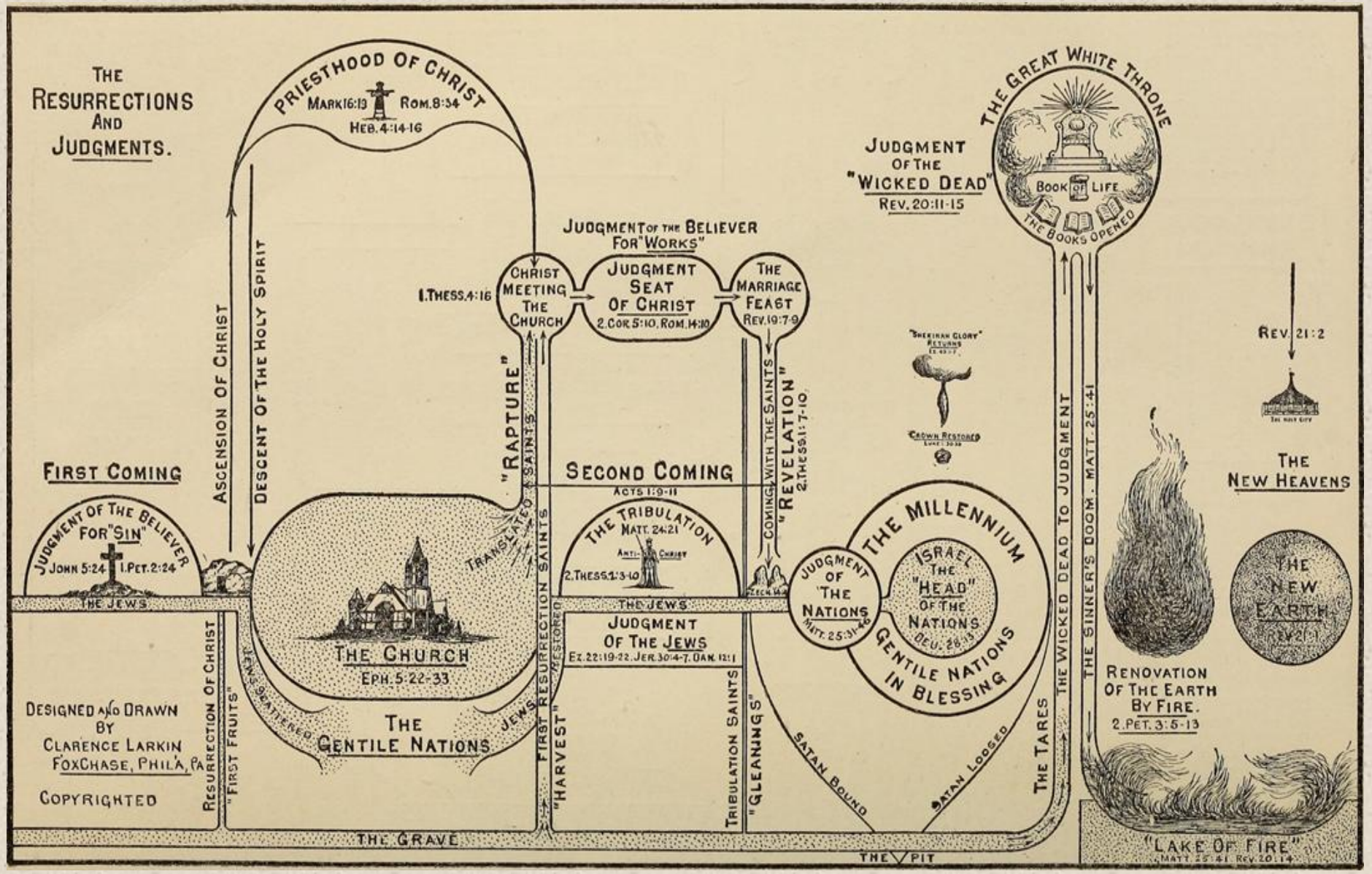
The Dead in Christ will Rise First

1 Thessalonians 4

From the Protestant cemetery in Rome with the Cestius pyramid, mountains in the background
by Hans Andersen Brendekilde (1875-1942)

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so, shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We wait patiently.


THE RESURRECTIONS AND JUDGMENTS.
PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST
MARK 16:19 ROM. 8:34
HEB. 4:14-16
ASCENSION OF CHRIST
DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
I. THESS. 4:16
CHRIST MEETING THE CHURCH
JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER FOR "WORKS"
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST
2. COR. 5:10, ROM. 14:10
THE MARRIAGE FEAST
REV. 19:7-9
"RAPTURE"
COMING WITH THE SAINTS
"REVELATION"
2. THESS. 1:7-10
JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED DEAD
REV. 20:11-15
THE GREAT WHITE THRONE
BOOK OF LIFE
THE BOOKS OPENED
"SHEKINAH GLORY" RETURNS
CROWN RESTORED
REV. 21:2
FIRST COMING
JUDGMENT OF THE BELIEVER FOR "SIN"
JOHN 5:24 I. PET. 2:24
THE JEWS
SECOND COMING
ACTS 1:9-11
THE TRIBULATION
MATT. 24:21
ANTI-CHRIST
2. THESS. 2:3-10
THE JEWS
THE MILLENNIUM
ISRAEL THE "HEAD" OF THE NATIONS
DEU. 28:13
GENTILE NATIONS IN BLESSING
JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS
MATT. 25:31-46
THE NEW HEAVENS
THE NEW EARTH
REV. 21:1
TRANSLATED SAINTS
THE CHURCH
EPH. 5:22-33
JUDGMENT OF THE JEWS
EZ. 22:19-22, JER. 30:4-7, DAN. 12:1
RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
"FIRST FRUITS"
JEWS SCATTERED
THE GENTILE NATIONS
FIRST RESURRECTION SAINTS
"HARVEST"
TRIBULATION SAINTS
"GLEANINGS"
SATAN BOUND
SATAN LOOSED
THE TARES
THE WICKED DEAD TO JUDGMENT
THE SINNER'S DOOM. MATT. 25:41
RENOVATION OF THE EARTH BY FIRE.
2. PET. 3:5-13
"LAKE OF FIRE"
MATT. 25:41 REV. 20:14
THE GRAVE
THE PIT
DESIGNED AND DRAWN BY CLARENCE LARKIN FOXCHASE, PHILA, PA
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Larkin's View

From Clarence Larkin Estate website by Cfrederick77 (2013)

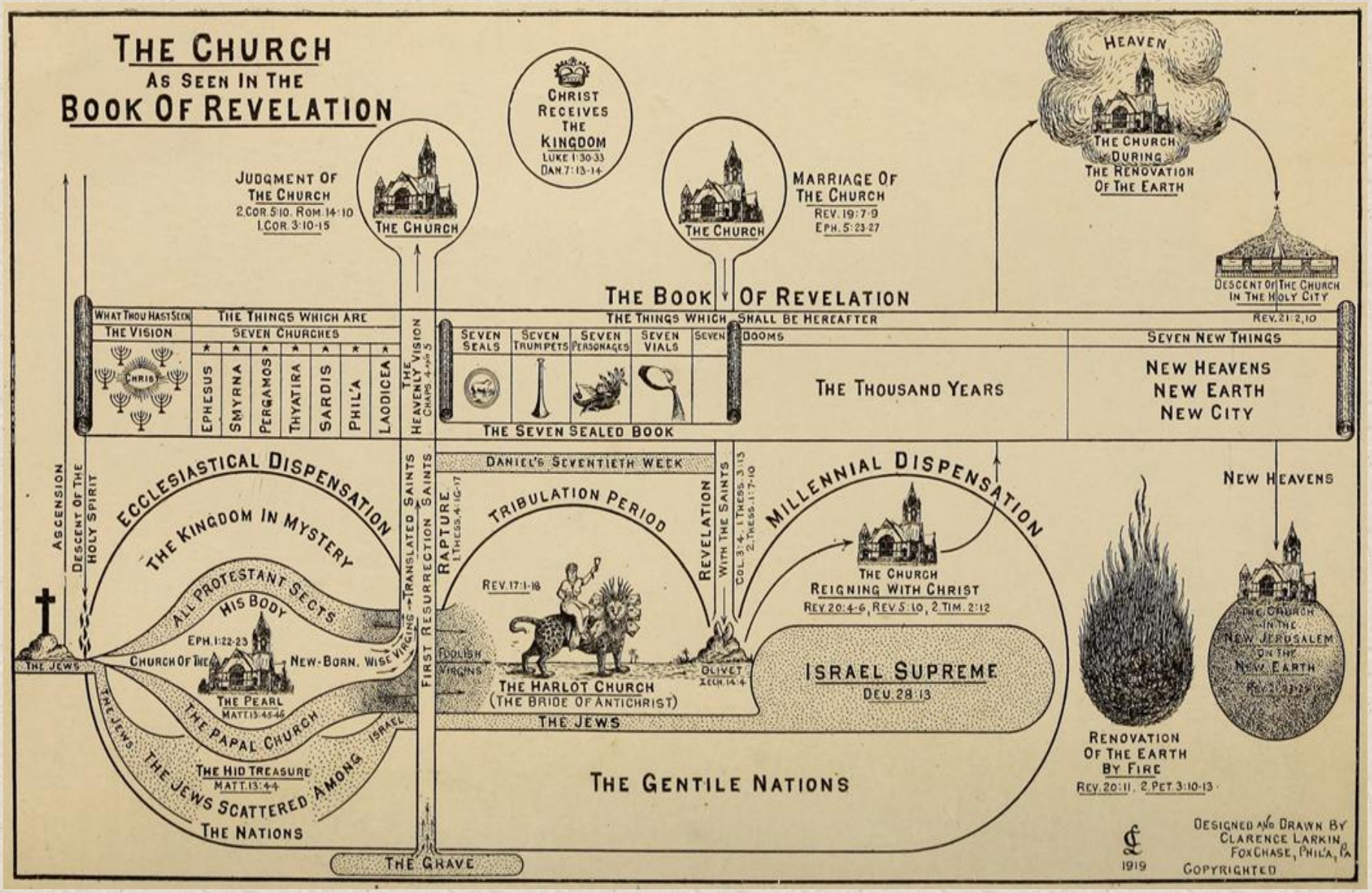
Clarence Larkin was an American Baptist pastor, Bible teacher and author whose writings on dispensationalism had a great impact on conservative Protestant visual culture in the 20th century.

The timing of endtime events is undetermined. Christ said, *concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only* (Matthew 24:36).

I do favor Larkin's endtime sequencing. Christ warned us to *stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming* (Matthew 24:42).

Larkin sees the Jews restored next to the rapture. They regained their nation in May, 1948. How close are we?

Keep your eye on world events so we will not be caught surprised.


THE CHURCH
AS SEEN IN THE
BOOK OF REVELATION
CHRIST RECEIVES THE KINGDOM
LUKE 1:30-33
DAN. 7:13-14
HEAVEN
THE CHURCH DURING THE RENOVATION OF THE EARTH
JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH
2 COR. 5:10. ROM. 14:10
1 COR. 3:10-15
THE CHURCH
THE CHURCH
MARRIAGE OF THE CHURCH
REV. 19:7-9
EPH. 5:23-27
DESCENT OF THE CHURCH IN THE HOLY CITY
REV. 21:2,10
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
WHAT THOU HAST SEEN
THE VISION
THE THINGS WHICH ARE
SEVEN CHURCHES
EPHESUS
SMYRNA
PERGAMOS
THYATIRA
SARDIS
PHIL'A
LAODICEA
THE HEAVENLY VISION CHAPS. 4 AND 5
THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER
SEVEN SEALS
SEVEN TRUMPETS
SEVEN PERSONAGES
SEVEN VIALS
SEVEN
DOOMS
SEVEN NEW THINGS
THE THOUSAND YEARS
NEW HEAVENS
NEW EARTH
NEW CITY
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ASCENSION
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HIS BODY
EPH. 1:22-23
CHURCH OF THE
NEW-BORN, WISE VIRGINS
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THE CHURCH IN THE NEW JERUSALEM ON THE NEW EARTH
REV. 21:22-27
RENOVATION OF THE EARTH BY FIRE
REV. 20:11, 2 PET. 3:10-13
1919
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The Church in Revelation

The Heart of the Andes by Frederic Edwin Church (1859)

The church has spread throughout the world. Truth has a way of making itself known wherever you are.

Notice in Larkin's take on the Church in Revelation, he sees the rapture after Christ dictates His letters to the seven churches. The church is not mentioned again until Chapter 19.

The tribulation is not for believers. It's to bring the Hebrews to faith in Christ, the One they have denied for the last 2000 years.

Thus, they will suffer trouble and oppression until they recognize Him as Messiah, most likely from the hands of the Muslims.

The Message

Revelation

Vision of Saint John at Patmos by Ethel Isadore Brown (1898)

Jesus Christ visited John in a vision during the late, first century to deliver a message of endtime events. He has always kept His prophets informed.

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure (Isaiah 46:9-10).

At the Last Supper He explained to His apostles, *from henceforth I tell you before it comes to pass, that, when it comes to pass, you may believe that I am He* (John 13:19).

For those willing to read it, Scripture is full of prophetic events, foretelling Christ's sacrifice and demonstrating His love and divinity. If you believe, you fear neither future events nor death, because you know every circumstance works for our good (Romans 8:28). Read the Scripture. Here are the letters.

Letter to Ephesus

Revelation 2

Woodcut from The Bible in Pictures by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1860)
Colored by ChatGPT

To the angel of the church in Ephesus - The words of Him Who holds the seven stars (angels of the churches) in His right hand, Who walks among the seven golden lampstands (churches).

I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that you cannot bear evil men, and did try them that call themselves apostles, and are not, and did find them false; and you had patience and did bear for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come, and will move your candlestick out of its place, except you repent. But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Some view this letter as a description of the Apostolic Church (1st Century), which was known for its hard work but losing its first love. Remember when we first came to Christ? Hold fast to Him while we endure. The Nicolaitans were those who compromised with paganism and were filled with licentiousness. I imagine they are still with us. Resist selfish passions.

Letter to Smyrna

Revelation 2

The Resurrection by Sebastiano Ricci (1715)

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna - The words of the First and the Last, Who died and came to life.

I know your tribulation, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

Some view this letter as a description of the Persecuted Church (2^{nd}-3^{rd} Century), enduring martyrdom and Roman persecution. It is one of only two churches Christ did not reprimand in some way. Endure.

Letter to Pergamon

Revelation 2

Acropolis of Pergamon by Friedrich Thierch (1882)

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum - The words of Him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

I know where you dwell, even where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. You also have some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore; or else I will come quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

Some view this letter as a description of the Compromising Church (4^{th}-6^{th} Century), which was highlighted by the union of church and state under Constatine, emperor 306-337 AD. Pergamon was centered around the massive altar to Zeus and worship of Asclepius.

Satan's throne has likely moved over time to the wealthiest and most materialistic places in the world, perhaps places of immense idolatry. Where might it be today? New York, London, Paris, Rome, Tehran, Beijing or Mecca?

Letter to Thyatira

Revelation 2

Jezebel by John Byam Liston Shaw (1896)

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira - The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and Whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your works, your love and faith and ministry and patience, and your last works are more than the first. But I have this against you, that you suffer the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He that searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan; I cast upon you no other burden. Nevertheless, hold fast till I come. He that overcomes, and he that keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Some view this letter as a description of the corrupt Medieval Church (6^{th}-16^{th} Century), which experienced the rise of institutional power and false doctrines. Soliciting money, variety of teachings, corruption, inane priorities and rituals, pomp and circumstance, going well beyond the simple gospel message.

Letter to Sardis

Revelation 3

The Lydian Plain near Sardis, Asia Minor by Harald Jerichau (1878)

And to the angel of the church in Sardis - The words of Him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your works, that you have a name that claims you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works perfected before My God. Remember therefore how you have received and did hear; keep it, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I come upon you. But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Some view this letter as a description of the Protestant Reformation Church (16^{th}-18^{th} Century), seen outwardly as alive but often inwardly dead. Superficial? Say one thing but do another? How deep is our faith? It is never too late to repent. Turn back. We all fail from time to time. Allow the Spirit to fill you.

Letter to Philadelphia

Revelation 3

By the Open Door by Nicolai Astrup (1902-1911)

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia - The words of the Holy One, the True One, Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one will shut, Who shuts and no one opens.

I know your works (behold, I have set before you a door opened, which none can shut), that you have little power, and did keep My word, and did not deny My name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you did keep the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which you have, that no one take your crown. He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My own new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Some view this letter as a description of the Missionary Church (18th-20th Century), an era of great revival, evangelism, and brotherly love. Oh, that it would have continued! He will keep believers from the hour of trial. He says He is coming soon. Believe Him!

Letter to Laodicea

Revelation 3

The Light of the World by William Holman Hunt (1866)
Colored by ChatGPT

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea - The words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of God's creation.

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked: I counsel you to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, that the shame of your nakedness not be made manifest; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Some view this letter as a description of the current era which is apostate, materialistic, compromising, and lukewarm. Christ is on the outside. Oh, I pray we are not included. Let us examine ourselves.

Called to Heaven

Revelation 4

St John Altarpiece by Hans Memling (1479)

After these things I (John) *saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, come up hither, and I will show you the things which must come to pass hereafter. Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne; and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads, crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal.*

The church is not mentioned again until chapter 19, so some view this as an allusion to the rapture, when believers are caught up to the Lord. If we are in the time of the last church, how close are we?

The Seven Spirits of God

Isaiah 11:2

The Four and Twenty Elders by William Blake (1803-5)

Isaiah lists seven Spirits of God. Perhaps they are the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne.

And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah.

Time Narrowing

Isaac ben Judah Abravanel, 1437-1508, commonly referred to just as Abravanel. Portuguese Jewish statesman, philosopher, Bible commentator, and financier. Painting by Stephen Reid (1915) Colored by ChatGPT

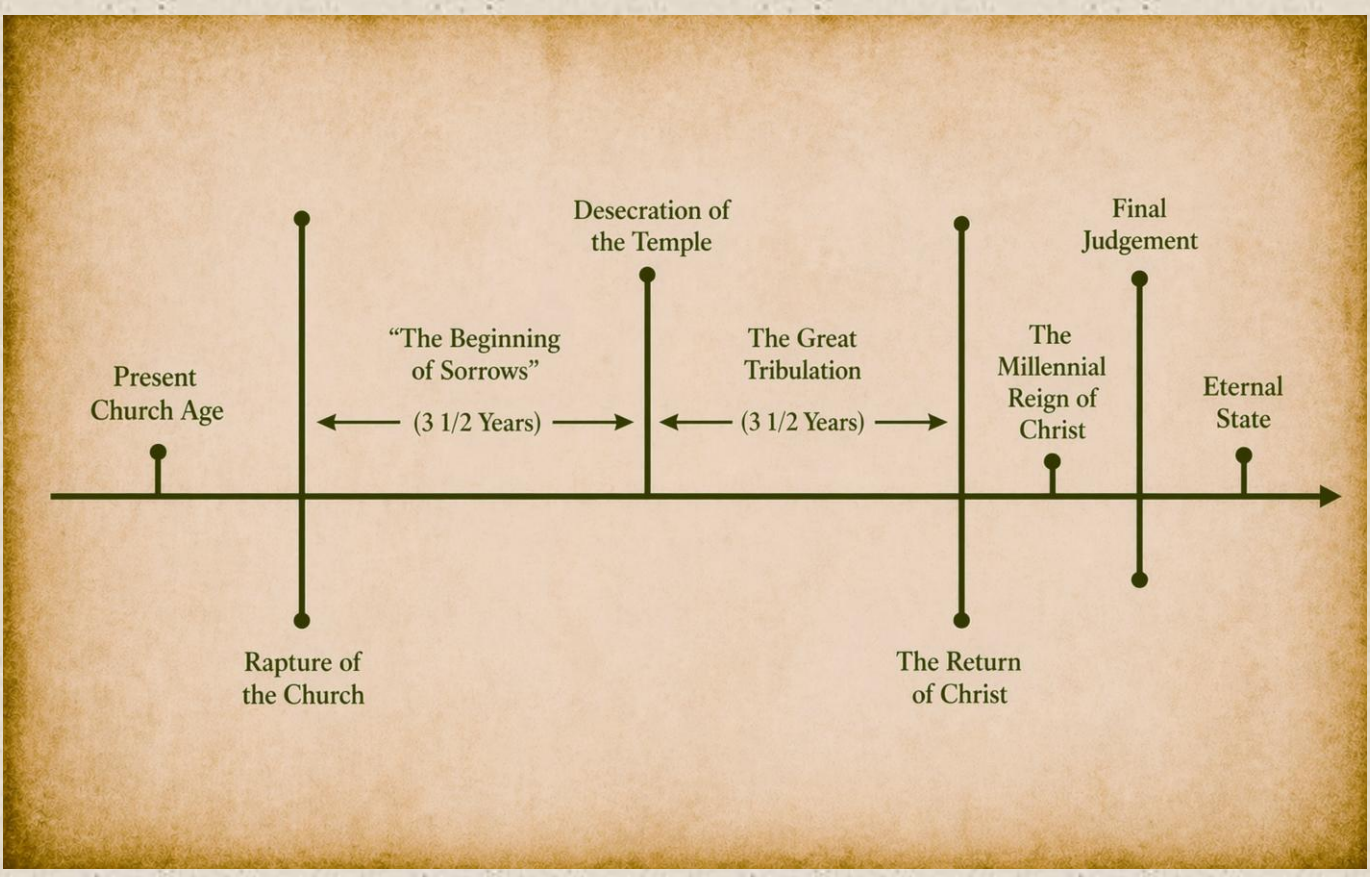
Abravanel argued the world would last 6000 years until the Messiah. Jewish rabbis and historians have long held this belief; the world would last one week – *For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night* (Psalm 90:4).

The world was made in six days, resting on the seventh, the sabbath being the first feast in Leviticus 23.

Peter wrote: *But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* (2 Peter 3:8-10).

The Lord will rule for the last thousand years, the rest. When do we reach the end of the first 6000? There are scholarly debates. Many hold Adam and Eve were created around 4000 BC, based largely on Scripture's recorded number of years between generations. We seem quite close.

Timeline



Pretribulation View

We stand on the left in the present Church age, awaiting the rapture, which begins the tribulation and the kingdom of the antichrist, who desecrates the temple by declaring himself god. This will bring God's wrath and the earthly return of Christ.

This seems a common perspective today, but certainly not universal. Some hold to a mid-tribulation view of the rapture, others post-tribulation. Have you noticed how many prophecy updates there are today. Thank goodness there are those who help us watch.

Scripture provides many verses on endtime events.

We find the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4*, For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up* (from the Latin rapturo*) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Not Destined for Wrath

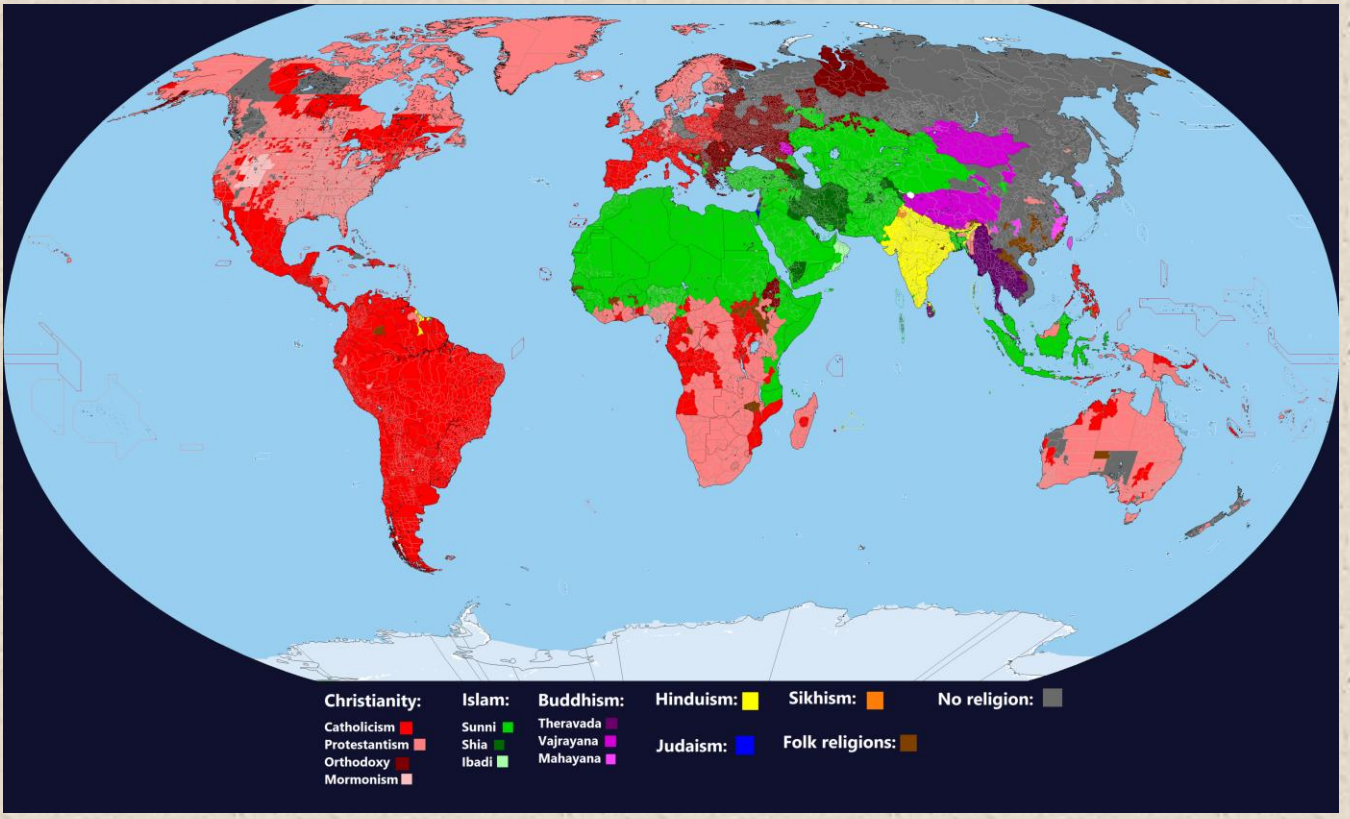
1 Thessalonians 5

Saint Paul by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617–1682)

Paul continues in his letter to remind the Thessalonians the day of the Lord will not surprise them. God did not destine them for wrath, which leads us to believe they would be removed before the tribulation.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that aught be written unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. When they are saying, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Status of Religion



Map of World Religions (2018)

The Lord gave the task of keeping His Word to the Jews. They are His chosen. Despite making up only 0.2% of the world's population, they are the object of the Lord's focus during the tribulation. He intends they acknowledge His Son. So, there is a reason such a small number of people take up so much of the world's attention.

Keep your eye on Israel.

Christianity is the largest, most widespread religion in the world. Perhaps evidence for its truth.

Islam is expanding, now through immigration, and intent on destroying the Jews and Christians.

THE WORLD AS KNOWN TO THE HEBREWS
ACCORDING TO THE MOSAIC ACCOUNT.
BLACK SEA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
PERSIAN GULF
RED SEA or ARABIAN GULF
GULF of ADEN
Scythians
Cimmerians
Caucasus Mts
Caspian Sea
Riphath Mts
Javan
Tiras
Tubal
Meshech
Gog
Magog
Togarmah
Ashkenaz
Gomer
Riphath
Madai
Elam
Ludim
Lydians
Rhodes
Caphthorim (Crete)
Kittim (Cyprus)
Casluhim
Lehabim (Libyans)
Phut
Egyptians
Pathrusim
Naphtuhim
Memphis
Thebes
Syene
Meroe
Nubia
Ethiopians
Cush
Seba
Havilah
Sabtah
Raamah
Sabthecha
Dedan
Sheba
Ophir
Hadoram
Uzal
Diklah
Obal
Abimael
Sheleph
Hazarmaveth
Jerah
Jobab
Almodad
Mesha
Sephar
Sur
Babel
Mandeb
Ur of the Chaldees
Haran
Mesopotamia
Assyrians
Calah
Resen
Nineveh
Rehoboth
Babel
Erech
Accad
Calneh
Shinar
Elam
Shushan
Persia
Media
Rages
Ecbatana
Arphaxad
Lud
Aram
Uz
Hul
Gether
Mash
Gomer
Togarmah
Javan
Elishah
Tarshish
Kittim
Dodanim
Tiras
Thubal
Meshech
Gog
Magog
Tarshish
Ashkenaz
Riphath
Togarmah
Gomer
Madai
Javan
Tubal
Meshech
Tiras
Thiras
Thogarmah
Ashkenaz
Riphath
Gomer
Madai
Javan
Tubal
Meshech
T

Gog Magog War

Ezekiel 38

Abaddon and Angels by Fedor Zavialov (before 1843)

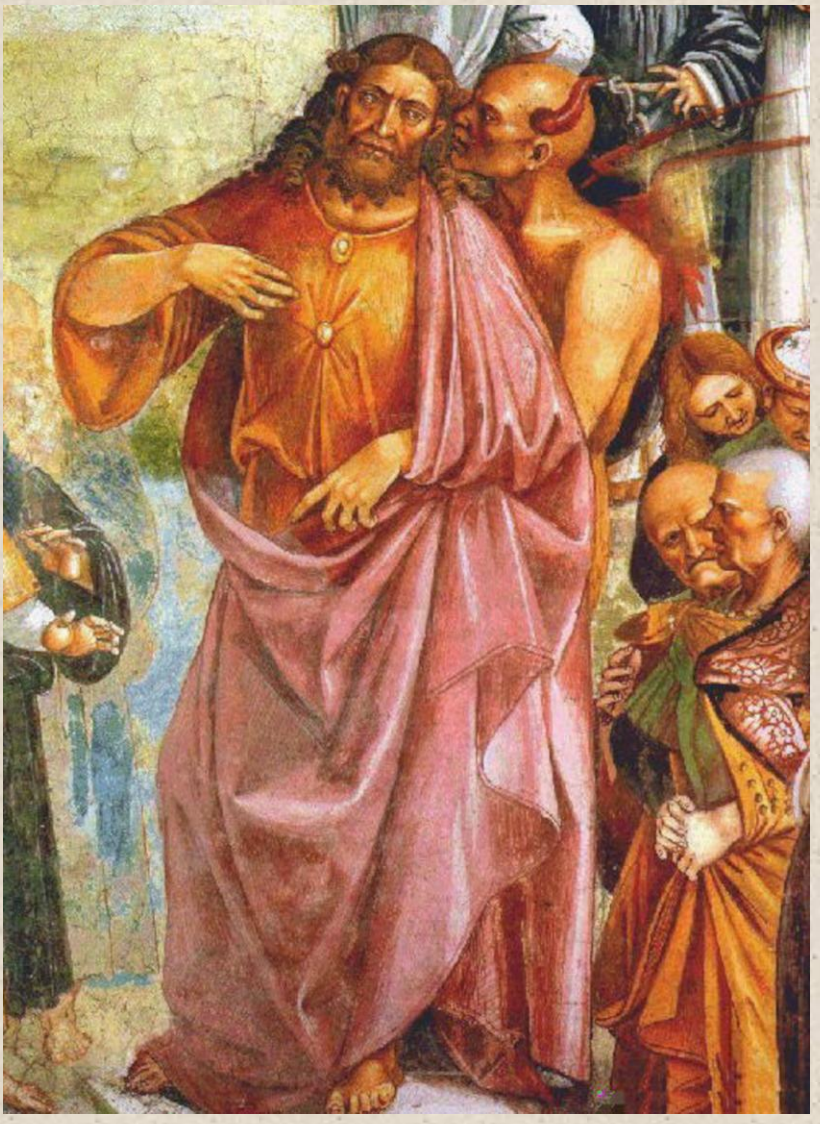
Gog is the angel of the bottomless pit. His name is Abaddon in Hebrew (Destruction) and Apollyon in Greek (Destroyer). (Amos 7 in the Septuagint version and Revelation 9)

And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal: and I will turn thee about, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them handling swords: Persia, Cush, and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer, and all his hordes; the house of Togarmah in the uttermost parts of the north, and all his hordes; even many peoples with thee.

These nations will come against Israel to wage war. Look for such a confederation. Gog is the spiritual force behind it all. See the map. The nations include Iran, Sudan, Libya, Turkey, Russia and central Asia. Of interest are those not participating, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The attacking forces will be destroyed.

Should this account occur soon, Gog and Magog will wage war again at the end (Revelation 20) of Christ's millennial reign.

Antichrist



Antichrist with the Devil, from the Deeds of the Antichrist by Luca Signorelli (1501)

Endtime events are also associated with the antichrist. Look for him. He will be admired by all whose names have not been written in the Book of Life, and he will have apparently survived a mortal wound (Revelation 13).

There have been many antichrists through time, people who oppose Christ, but The Antichrist is a world leader near the end, who will be charismatic and deceitful. He will likely be viewed as the Jew's Messiah and the Islamic Mahdi during the time of the third Temple. Watch for it to be rebuilt. Likely he will be taken by Satan as was Judas Iscariot.

2 Thessalonians tells us the man of lawlessness will not be revealed until the restrainer (Spirit) is removed (Rapture), and that he will declare himself god in the temple. This leads us to believe the Rapture precedes his appearance. Watch for it.

Daniel 7/11 tells us there will be a ten-nation kingdom where the antichrist will subdue three leaders and speak against the Most High. Watch for such a confederation.

70th Week

Daniel 9

Daniel's Prayer and the Angel Gabriel by an unknown artist (1886)
Colored by ChatGPT

Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Anointed One, the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall the Anointed One be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate.

Gabriel brought Daniel a prophecy, announcing Christ will arrive and be sacrificed in 69 weeks (of years). The prince who is to come (Antichrist) will be of the Roman Empire, whose people destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. The final week of the prophecy, the tribulation, is on pause in this age of grace, and expected to commence when he makes a strong covenant with, we think, the Hebrews - probably involving an end to hostilities and construction of a temple. Midway he commits an abomination, declaring himself god.

Knowledge will Increase

Daniel 12

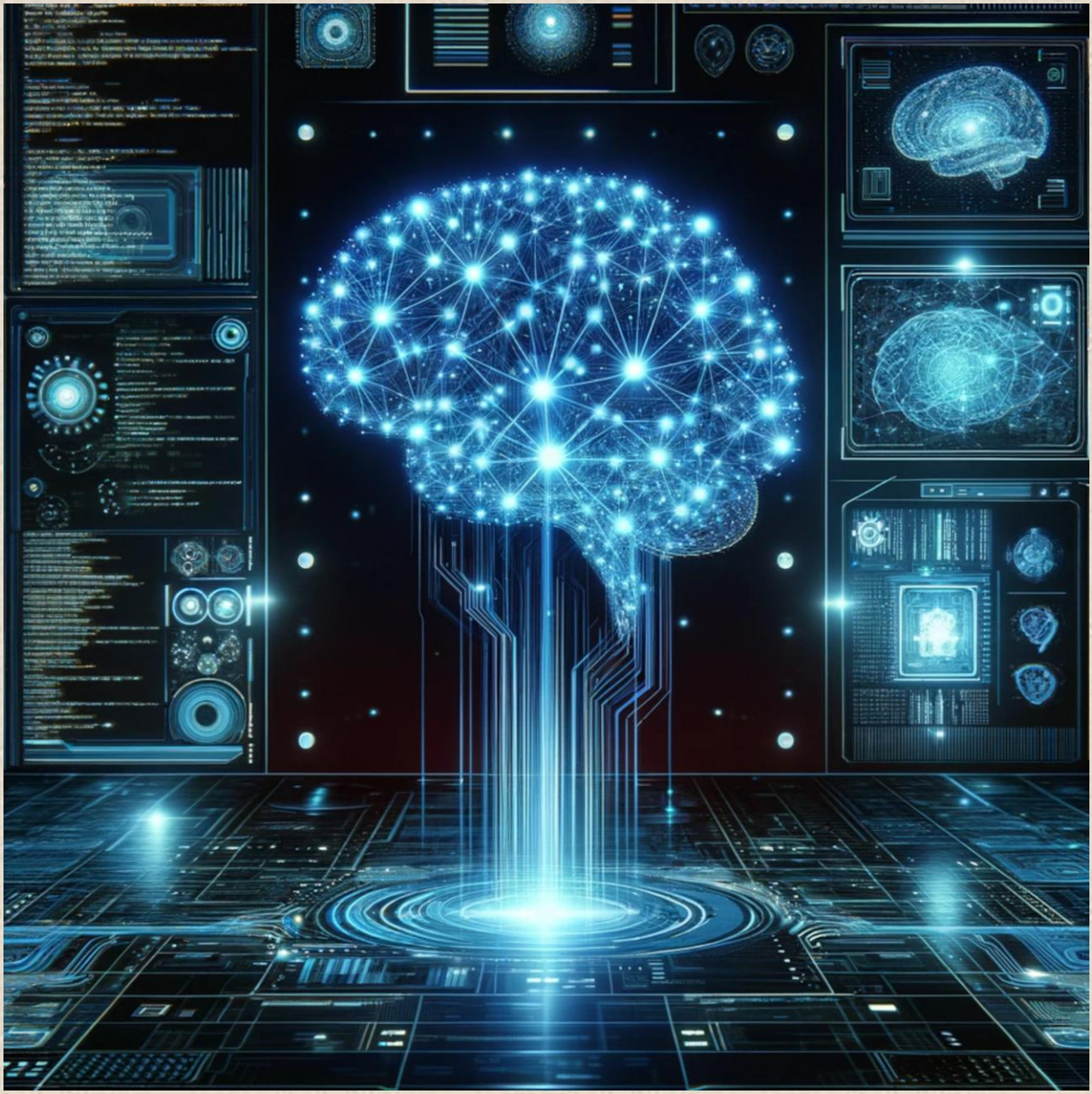


Image generated by DALL-E 3, symbolizing advanced artificial intelligence by Alenoach (2023)

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

Perhaps the book is no longer sealed. Knowledge is increasing exponentially, considering computerized systems and artificial intelligence? Watch it expand.

Damascus

Isaiah 17

Destruction, from The Course of Empire by Thomas Cole (1836)

Damascus, Syria will be destroyed, expected in the endtime.

Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. And the fortress shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, says Jehovah of hosts.

The Scroll

Revelation 5

John's Vision of Heaven by Matthias Gerung (1530-1532)

And I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, who is worthy to open the book, and to loosen the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: and one of the elders said unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And He came, and he took it out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne.

The White Horse

Revelation 6

Vision of the White Horse, Bowyer Bible by Philippe Jacques De Loutherbourg (1800)
Colored by ChatGPT

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

The Red Horse

Revelation 6

War Horse by Davin Arries (2023)

And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

The Black Horse

Revelation 6

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, The Rider on the Black Horse by George Frederic Watts (1878)

And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt not.

The Pale Horse

Revelation 6

Death on the Pale Horse by Benjamin West (1817)

And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Have we seen the four horsemen yet? Certainly, we have always had wars and famine in certain areas. These horsemen seem to take things to a higher, broader, level. I imagine their release will be obvious.

The Fifth Seal

Revelation 6

The Opening of the Fifth Seal (The Vision of St John) by El Greco (1608-1614)

And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.

The Sixth Seal

Revelation 6

Opening the Seals - Earthquakes from Mortier's Bible by Phillip Medhurst colored by ChatGPT

And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casts away her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of Their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

Seal the 144,000

Revelation 7

Cloisters Apocalypse - Adoration of the Lamb by the 144-thousand by Medieval (1330)

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed 12,000 out of every tribe of the children of Israel:

These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sits on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

The Seventh Seal

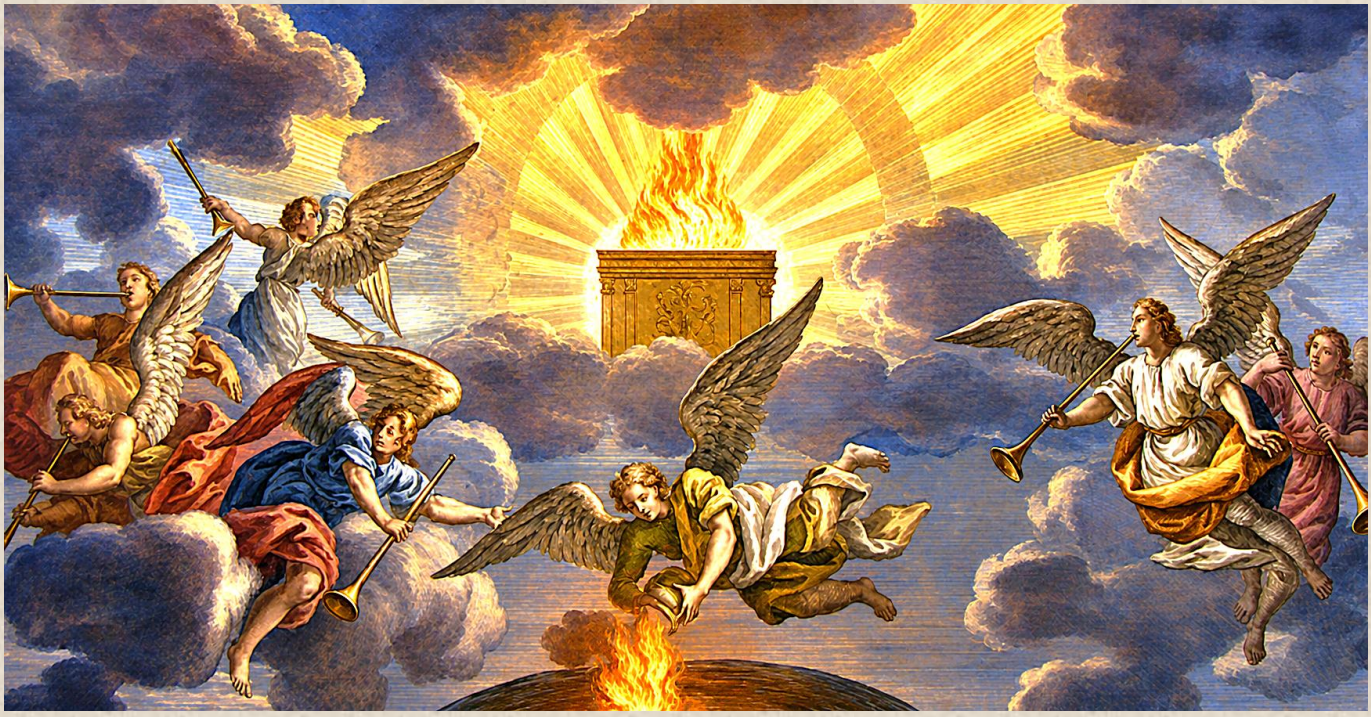
Revelation 8

Bible in Pictures by Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1860)
Colored by ChatGPT

And when He opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel takes the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8



Ulrich Bible – Apocalypse, The Seven Trumpets by Georg David Nessenthaler (1775)
Colored by ChatGPT

The first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, even they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

The third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

The Eagle Cries – Woe, Woe, Woe

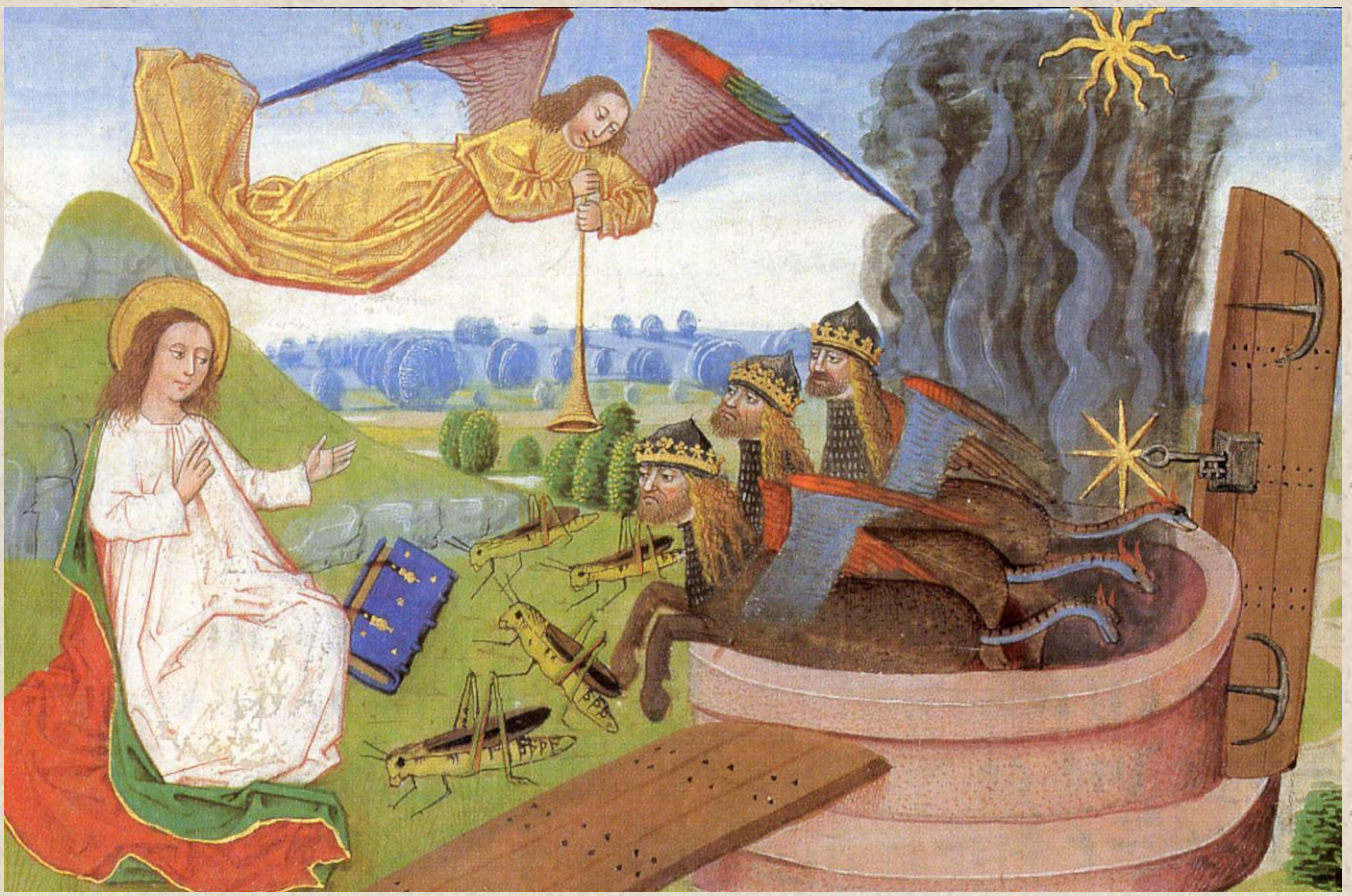
Revelation 8

Wild Golden Eagle in Flight

And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

Fifth Trumpet

Revelation 9



Locusts Come up from the Pit by Loyset Liédet and his workshop (15th century)

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it strikes a man. And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death flee from them.

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon.

Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 9

The Sixth Trumpet Soundeth by Henry Howard (1804)

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel that had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them. And I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeds fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they hurt.

And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The Seven Thunders

Revelation 10

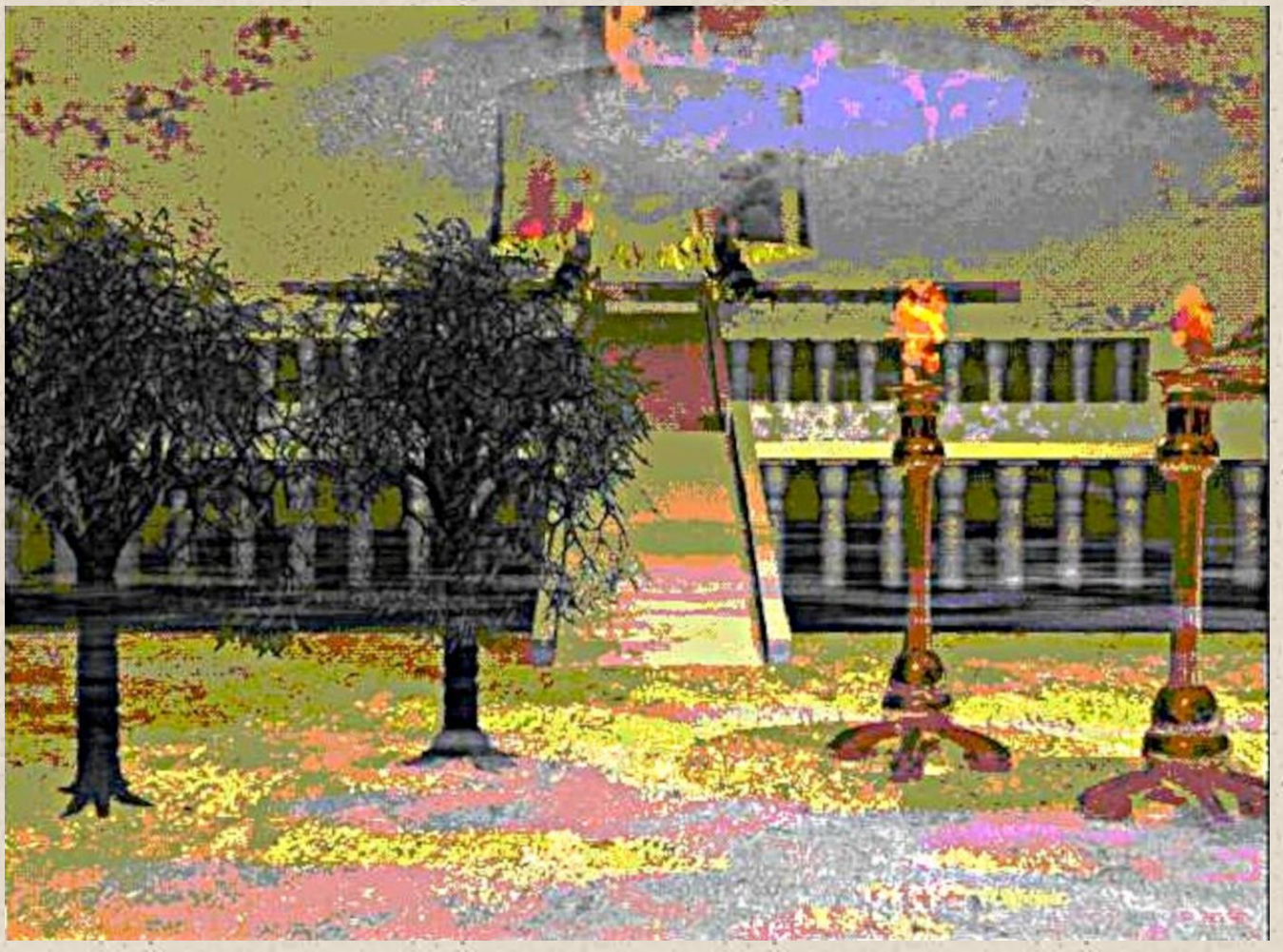
Angel of the Revelation by William Blake (1803-1805)

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swear by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He declared to His servants the prophets. And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth.

And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he said unto me, take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth, it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11



The Two Witnesses designed electronically by Sean Mayfield (2007)

And I will give unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. And if any man desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rains not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

They will possibly be Moses and Elijah due to the miracles performed and their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguation (Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9).

Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 11

The Last Judgment (trumpet detail) by Michelangelo (1537-1541)

And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God.

And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The Woman and the Dragon

Revelation 12

The Woman Clothed with the Sun Fleeth
from the Persecution of the Dragon
by Benjamin West (1797)

And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered. And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draws the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered, he may devour her child. And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

The woman is believed to be Israel, with the stars representing the twelve tribes. She is probably about to accept the Messiah they have so long denied. Satan would like to prevent this, so she flees to a safe place.

Satan Thrown Down to Earth

Revelation 12

Michael Fights Against Devils by printmaker Jan Punt (1750)
Colored by ChatGPT

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God, day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.

Though Satan was cast to the ground by God when iniquity was first found in him (Ezekiel 28), he was allowed access in heaven to accuse humans (e.g. Job 1). Apparently, no longer.

Escape

Revelation 12

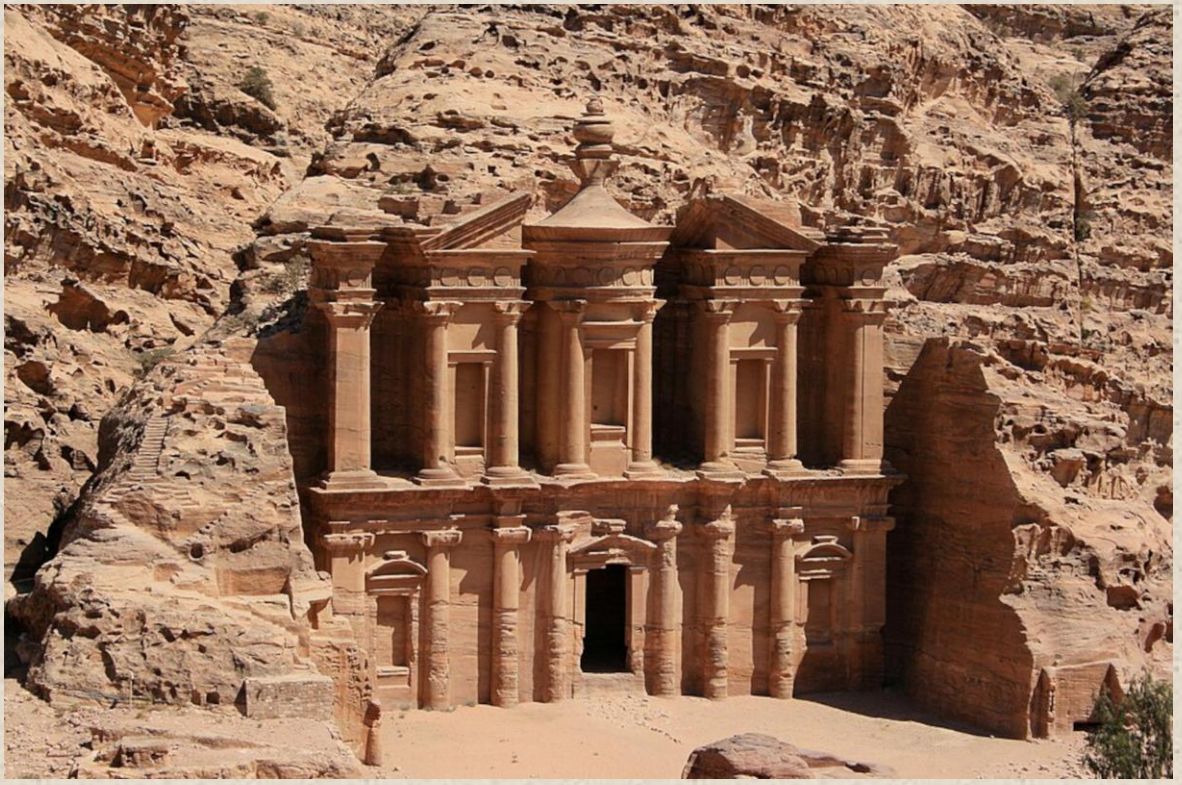
The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun by William Blake (1805-1810)

And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child. And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

Petra, Jordan seems a likely location for her to flee, 166 miles south of Jerusalem via the Jordan Valley.

Petra, Jordan

Matthew 24



The Monastery, Petra, Jordan image by Diego Delso (2011)

And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man leads you astray. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in diverse places. But all these things are the beginning of travail.

Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all the nations for My name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.

When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand), then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

The Beast

Revelation 13

The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea by William Blake (1805)

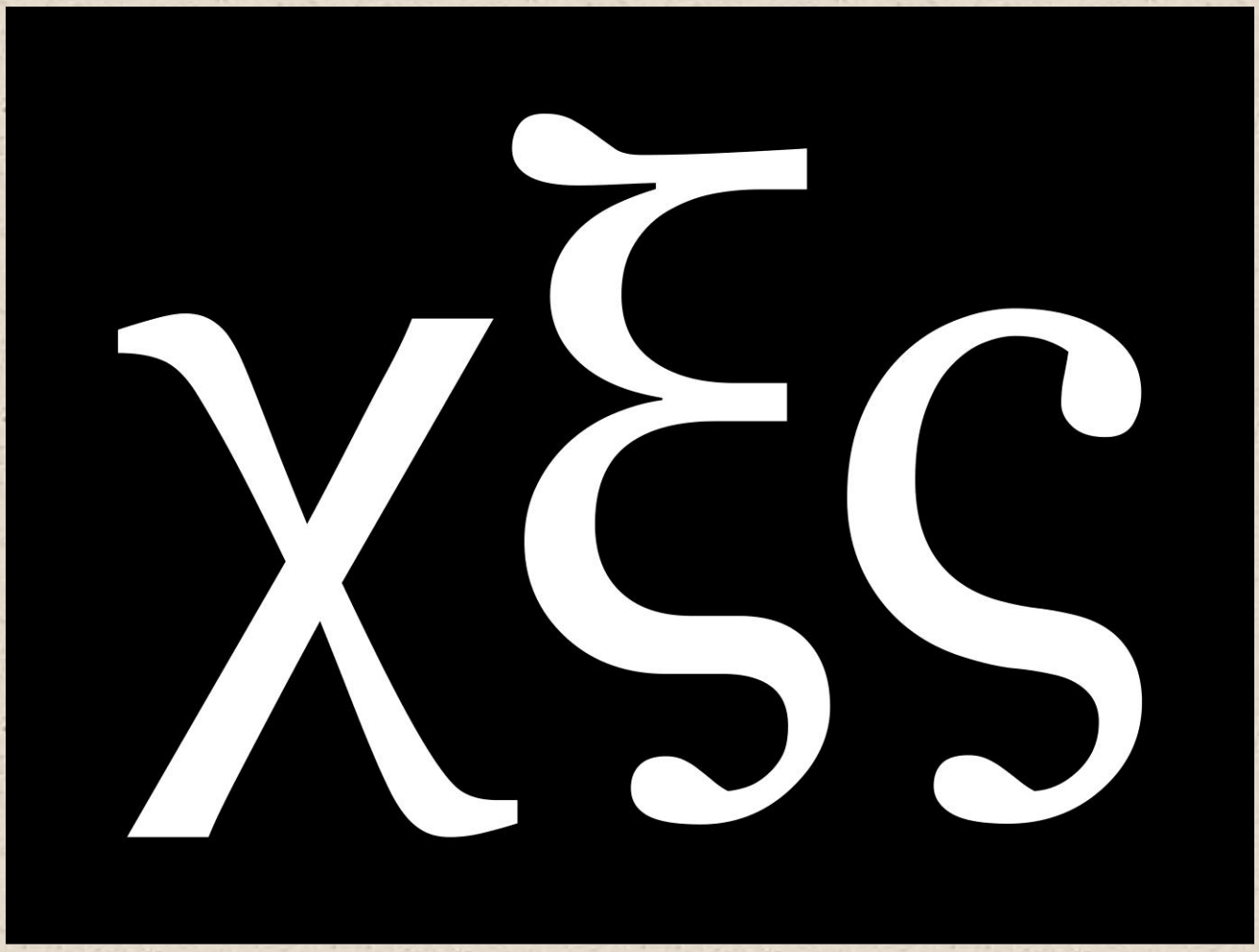
And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads, names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war with him?

Interestingly, animals are used as symbols of nations. Leopard: India, Kyrgyzstan (Snow Leopard), Rwanda, and Somalia. Bear: Russia, Finland, Canada (often represented), and Switzerland. Lion: England (UK), Kenya, Singapore, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ethiopia, Morocco, and India (Lion Capital).

There was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13



666 in Greek number notation by Al2 (Aldo)

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he makes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. And he does great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who has the stroke of the sword and lived. And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred and sixty and six.

Do not accept the mark. Likely required by the second beast (false prophet) who brings an image (Artificial intelligence?) of the first beast (Antichrist) to life.

Messages of the Three Angels

Revelation 14

Three Angels by Gerard de Jode (1585)

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name.

Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

The Harvest

Revelation 14

The Winepress of the Wrath of God by Jean Duvet (1485-1561) Colored by ChatGPT

And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud I saw One sitting like unto a Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to Him that sat on the cloud, send forth your sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, he that had power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

From the Winepress

Isaiah 63

Who is He that Cometh from Edom with Dyed Garments from Bozrah? By Simeon Solomon (1862)

Reminds me of Isaiah's record of a winepress in Edom, modern name Jordan. Protecting those in Petra?

Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Glorious in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? I speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why are You red in your apparel, and your garments like him who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with Me: yea, I trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore, My own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My wrath, it upheld Me. And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.

Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

Revelation 16

Seven Angels Pouring Vials of the Wrath of God upon the Earth by a British School Painter Influenced by William Blake (19th century)

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God onto the earth.

First - grievous sores upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image.

Second - the sea became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, things that were in the sea.

Third - the waters became blood.

Fourth - the sun scorched men with fire. And men blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give Him glory.

Fifth - the beast's kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising. And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.

Armageddon

Revelation 16

Armageddon by the circle of Pierre de Cortone (17th century)

And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, it is done: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, comes down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

The Great Prostitute and the Beast

Revelation 17

The Whore of Babylon from the Ottheinrich Bible (1530-1532)

And the angel said unto me, I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carried her, which has seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come. Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits: and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into perdition. And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful. And he said unto me, the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire. For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. And the woman you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Rome is known as the city built on seven hills.

The Fall of Babylon

Revelation 18

The Fall of Babylon; Cyrus the Great defeating the Chaldean by John Martin (1831)

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.

And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in you; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery were all the nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

Judgment Seat of Christ

2 Corinthians 5

Christ Enthroned by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano (before 2023)

Paul told us Christ would judge believers, we think during the tribulation. Likely preceding the marriage feast of the Lamb.

We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.

It is thought that believers will be rewarded at the Bema Seat of Christ to honor them for their works, a judgment separate from the Last Judgment.

Marriage Feast of the Lamb

Revelation 19

Adoration of the Lamb from the Ghent Altarpiece by Jan and Hubert van Eyck (1432)

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying,

Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, these are true words of God. And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, see thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Rider on the White Horse

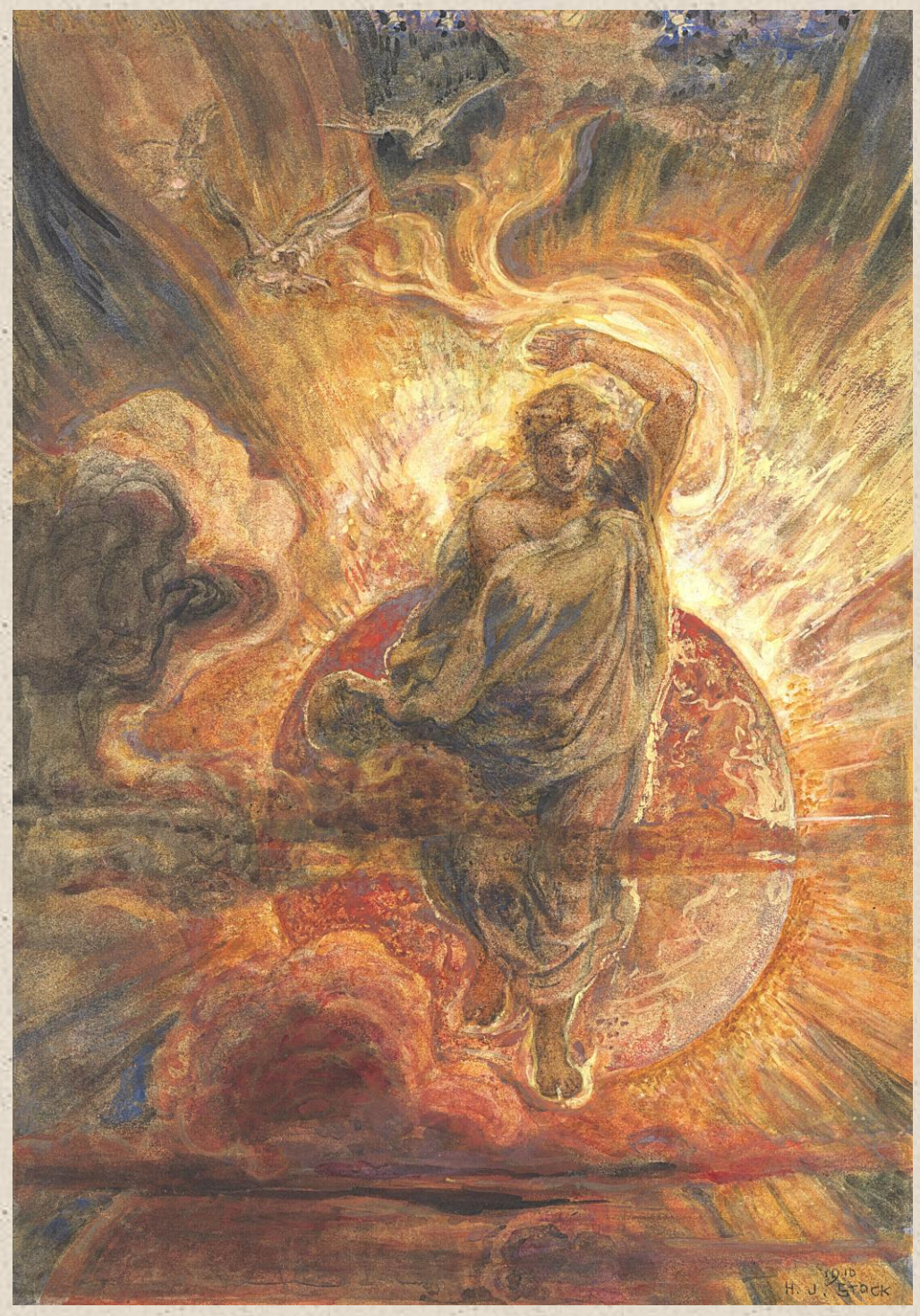
Revelation 19

The Militant Christ by Viktor M. Vasnetsov (1887)

And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He does judge and make war. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written which no one knows but He Himself. And He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Angel Standing in the Sun

Revelation 19



The Angel standing in the Sun by Henry John Stock (1910)

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.

Lake of Fire

Revelation 19

The Beast Cast into the Lake of Fire by Henry John Stock (1904)

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: and the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Satan Bound

Revelation 20

Satan Bound for 1000 years from The Great Bible of Pieter Mortier (1700)
Colored by ChatGPT

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

First Resurrection

Revelation 20

Cloisters Apocalypse - First resurrection of the dead – Medieval (1330)

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Through a Glass Darkly

1 Thessalonians 4-5/1 Corinthians 13

Behind A Glass Darkly by Andreas Manessinger (2017)

The first resurrection? How does this fit with what we read in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians? The dead rising first and the living caught up we think before the tribulation so they avoid the wrath.

One may be spiritual, while the other physical.

There are a number of perspectives regarding resurrections which divide scholars. Each point of view has merit and worthy of consideration. We state ours with humility.

Scripture tells us our earthly vision is rather dim. We are told what the Lord intends for us, and though it is what we require now, I imagine it is very little of the whole story. I trust the Word is infallible in its original language, but our translations and interpretations can be quite flawed, and perhaps we make assumptions in error.

Keep watch.

Mount Zion

Micah 4

Mount Zion Jerusalem from Heritage Conservation Jerusalem by Oshra Dayan (2020)

But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem; and He will judge between many peoples, and will decide concerning strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Satan's Demise

Revelation 20

Satan Thrown into a Lake of Burning Sulfur by Gerard de Jode (1585)

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Last Judgment

Revelation 20

The Last Judgment by Raphael Coxie (1588)

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

New Jerusalem

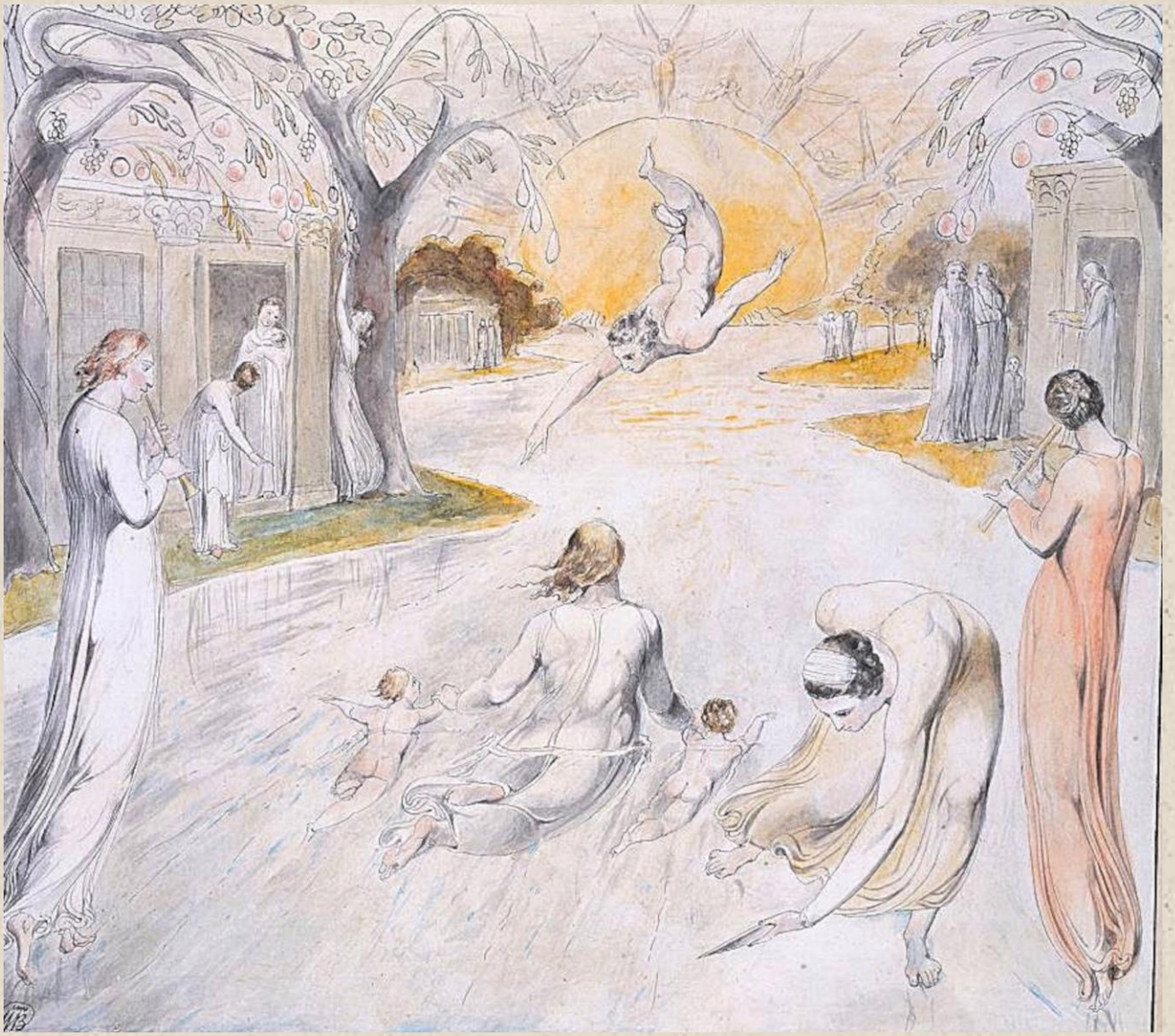
Revelation 21

A New Heaven and New Earth from Phillip Medhurst Collection (2008)
Colored by ChatGPT

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God: and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

The River of Life

Revelation 22



The River of Life by William Blake (1805)

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Coming Soon

Revelation 22

The Apocalypse of Saint John the Evangelist by Jan Massijs (1563)

I Jesus have sent my angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

He who testifies these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

Conclusion

Model of Jerusalem in the Late Second Temple Period by M. T. Lifshits (2012)

We have read Christ's words, reviewed Revelation and a number of other endtime prophecies. Now,

What to watch for – things coming

Rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem and restarting the sacrificial offerings.
Global unrest. Confederations of nations intending violence against Israel;
watch Iran, Turkey, Sudan, Libya, and Russia.
Global unrest. Rise of lawlessness.
Globalization towards a world leader.
An admired global leader.
One with a mortal wound.
Statements of peace and security.
Seven-year agreements with Israel.
Increases in knowledge and technological advancements. Artificial intelligence.
Surveillance systems. Introduction of subdermal implants to control buying and selling.
Two witnesses. Destruction of Damascus.
Natural disasters and disease pandemics.
Apathy, apostasy and moral decay.
Policies prejudicial to or violence against Hebrews and Christians.
Four Horsemen: conquest, war, famine, death.

What to do – from His letters

Remember your first love – Christ.
Toil in patience.
Do not bear evil men. Try false apostles.
Hate the works of the Nicolaitans.
Fear not suffering. Endure in your faith.
Hold fast Christ's name.
Do not deny the faith.
Do not hold the teaching of Balaam.
Be true to your love, faith, ministry and patience.
Do not commit fornication or eat things sacrificed to idols.
Do not be a Christian in name only.
Remember what you have received.
Repent. Be watchful.
Keep My word. Do not deny my name.
Be not lukewarm.
Buy of Me gold refined in fire, white garments, and eye salve.
Be chastened, be zealous, repent. Hear my voice and open the door. Sup with Me.

Our Struggle Through Time

Deceived

Satan Exulting over Eve by William Blake (1795)

The Purpose of Life

They Shouted for Joy

Genesis 1/Job 38/Ezekiel 28

The Pleiades, also known as Messier 45 or the Seven Sisters (2018)

Light the first day. Heaven the second day. Earth, seas, and vegetation the third day. Sun, moon, and stars the fourth day. Water creatures and birds the fifth day. Land creatures and man the sixth day.

Speaking to Job about creation - when *the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*.

Including Lucifer, *the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

Cast from Heaven

Ezekiel 28

Lucifer versus The Lord by Mihaly Zichy (1902) colored by ChatGPT

Lucifer, the light bearer, was cast from heaven, we believe, prior to the creation of Adam, for he played an adversarial role in Eden.

He was cast out because as the Lord explained…

You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire, you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade, you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so, I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground.

Then this former guardian cherub decided to influence humans.

Deception

Genesis 3

The Rebuke of Adam and Eve by Charles Joseph Natoire (1740)

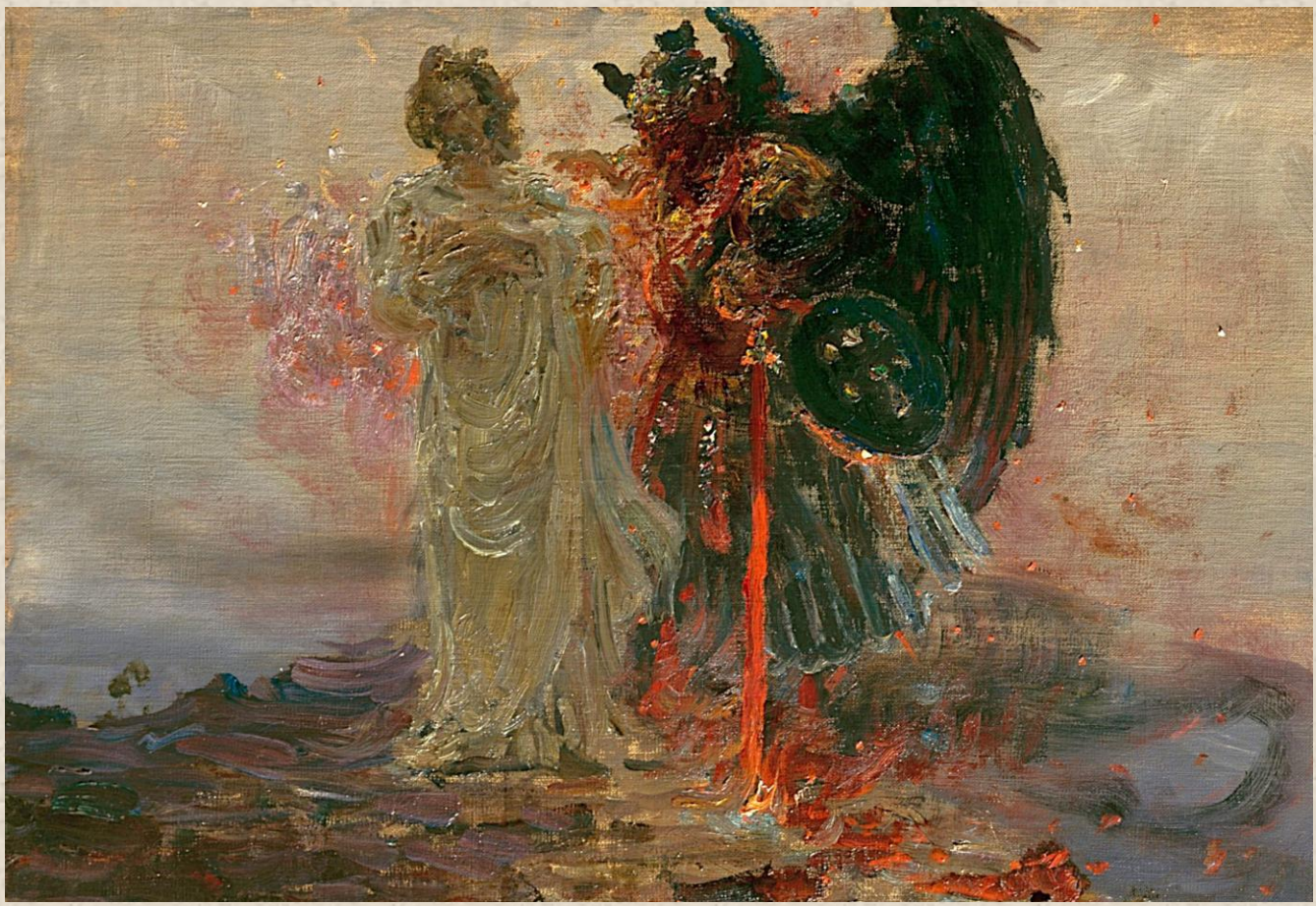
And we fell to his deception, which, I imagine, made him our sovereign. Christ called him the ruler of this world (John 14:20). Thus began the process of finding a way back to God. For thousands of years, we struggled, until Christ made the way.

Satan used deception to break our relationship to the Lord, and deception is his primary tool in keeping us isolated from the Creator. Do not be deceived.

He cannot openly kill anyone, though he can influence others to do such things. This is his strength and weakness. When resisted, he flees (James 4:7).

Desires of the Evil One

Matthew 4



Get Thee Behind Me, Satan by Ilya Repin (1895)

I imagine Satan did not recognize Jesus in His human form, which is why he tested Him. He queried, *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* Jesus was not fooled, nor did He show His power.

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You,' and 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest you strike Your foot against a stone.'"* Jesus withheld His power.

Lastly, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, *"All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me."* Jesus dismissed him.

The evil one's main desire, it seems, is to be worshipped, and secondly, to destroy everything that belongs to God. Which is why he wanted Christ dead, unknowingly assisting in Christ's mission on Earth.

Having been such a powerful, beautiful angel, being cast out of his home so warped his thinking, that repentance never came to mind. He is focused on retribution, and has been for thousands of years.

Abraham

Melchizedek and Abraham by Peter Paul Rubens (19th century)

In contrast, the Lord seems to have maintained a Priest of the Most High in the Jerusalem area, at least since Abraham, who lived around 2100 B.C., and interfaced with Melchizedek, then the current Priest of the Most High.

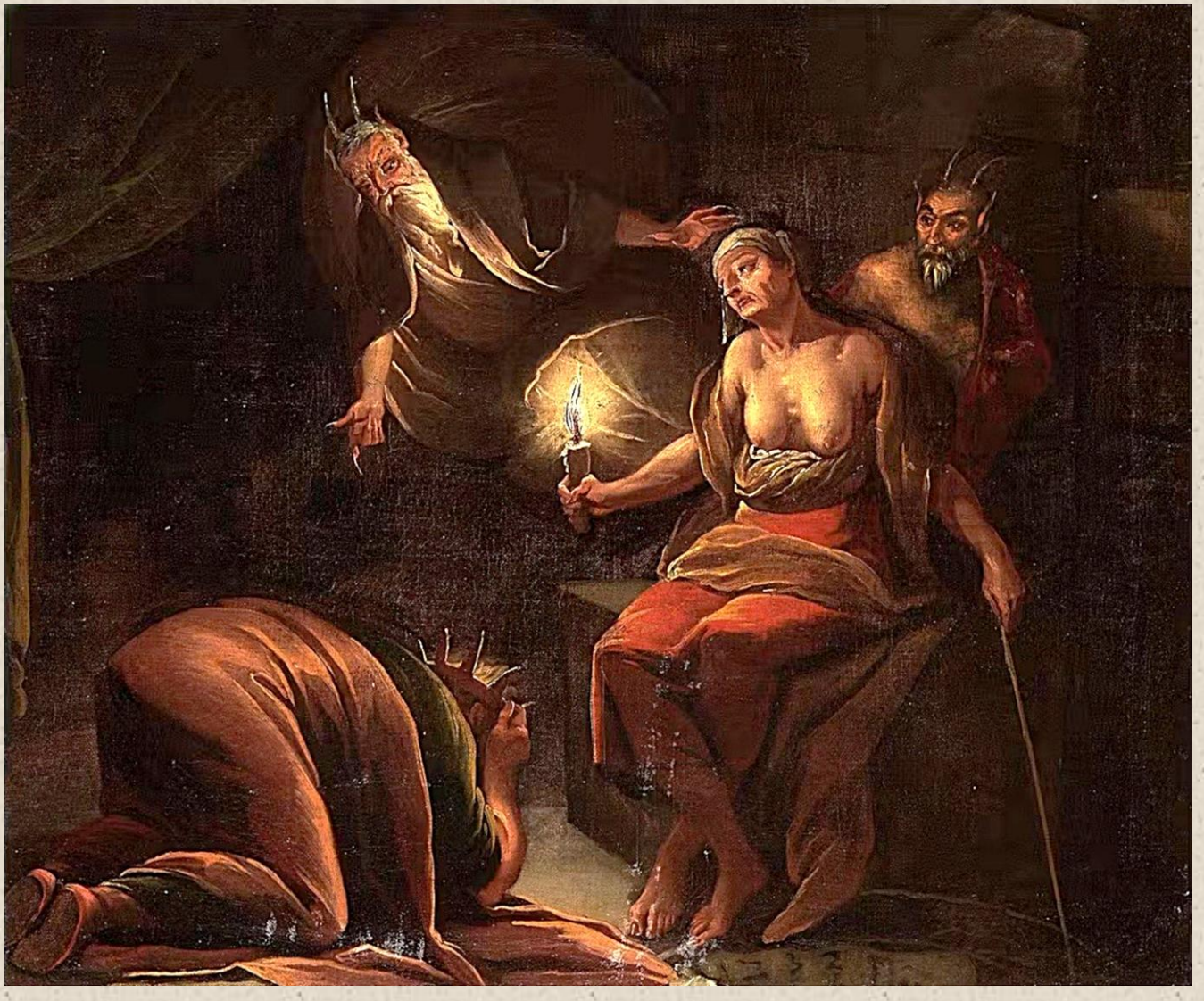
The Lord was forever present on Earth. *His abode was established in Salem, His dwelling place in Zion,* (Psalm76) and later, *I have chosen Jerusalem that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel* (2 Chronicles 6:6).

God's glory left the first temple around 586 B.C. due to idolatry and hypocrisy. His Spirit lives in believers.

Of course, God has always been here, for *in Him we live and move and have our being.* (Acts 17)

Witchcraft

John 8



An Allegory of Witchcraft by Dominicus van Wijnen (17th century)

The ruler of this world got his worship, perhaps first through witchcraft, which seems to have been with us from near the beginning and remains until this day.

Requesting the evil one of this world for powers for and against others.

How many celebrities have claimed to have sold their soul for fame and fortune?

They do not appreciate his character. Jesus told us…

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So, we ought to ponder why the Lord allows him to persist? He serves some purpose, either for himself, others or both.

Witch of Endor

1 Samuel 28

Witch of Endor by Nikolay Ge (1857)

We find witches even in the Bible. Here King Saul sought guidance from his advisor, the Prophet Samuel, who had died, through the Witch of Endor.

Samuel's spirit did indeed arise, attesting to the draw of witchcraft, though he condemned the summoning.

Nature Worship

Romans 1

Detail of Religion by Charles Sprague Pearce (1896)

No doubt, nature worship came early in the history of mankind because there is so much beauty in the world: plants, animals, rivers, lakes, oceans, and mountains. The ruler of this world encouraged such worship because it leaves our Creator out. Couldn't nature just occur on its own?

Sometime research the anthropomorphic principle, which argues so many aspects of the environment seem tailored specifically for mankind. Who might have done that?

Paul's comments to the Romans are enlightening.

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse.

Hinduism

Kali the Destroyer by George Grie (2006) colored by ChatGPT

Sometime between 1000-2000 B.C., Hinduism evolved from the Vedic era. Their deities number from the dozens to the hundreds.

Here we find Kali the Destroyer best known as the demon-slayer. She looks rather demonic to me.

Their deities can represent the forces of nature, moral values, the epitome of specialized knowledge, creative energy, even exalted or magical powers.

The ruler of this world finds some answer to the questions of mankind regarding the how, when, where, and who of created things, in order to draw us away from the source of life.

Egyptian Gods

The Gods and their Makers by Edwin Longsden Long (1878)

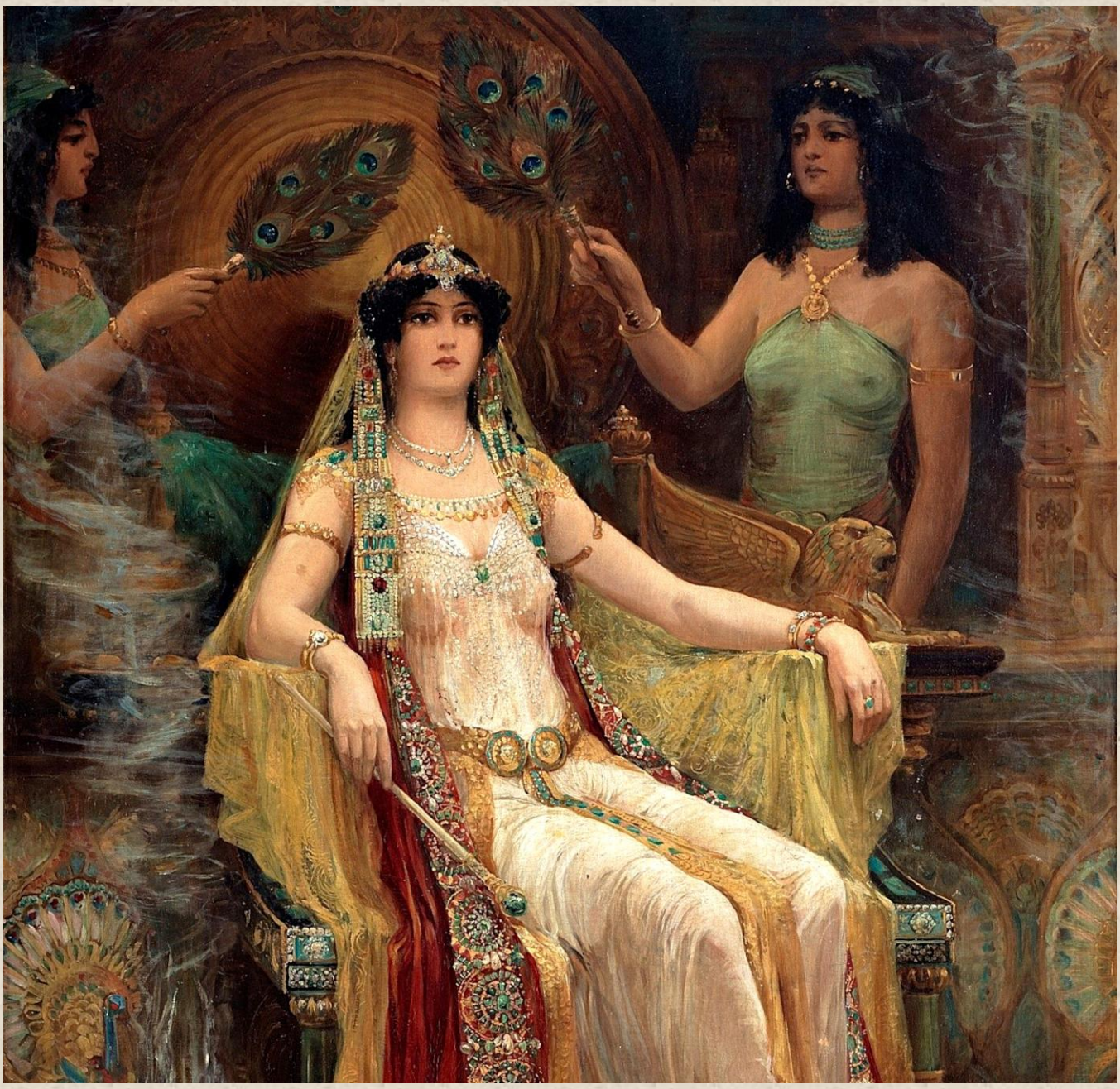
The Egyptians created their own gods sometime around 1800 B.C. Roughly 2,000 of them, including the sun god Ra, the god of the afterlife Osiris, his wife Isis, and their son Horus (a falcon-headed god).

Seeking to encourage god creation provided a method to point society in directions other than the truth for the one who sought retribution.

A couple hundred years later, the Egyptians were saved by Joseph, Jacob's son, who had been sold into slavery, and later they enslaved the Hebrews who had taken refuge in Egypt. Something wrong here.

Now they find themselves in bondage to Islam. I hope they find their way free.

Ethiopia



Queen of Sheba by Edward Slocombe (1907)

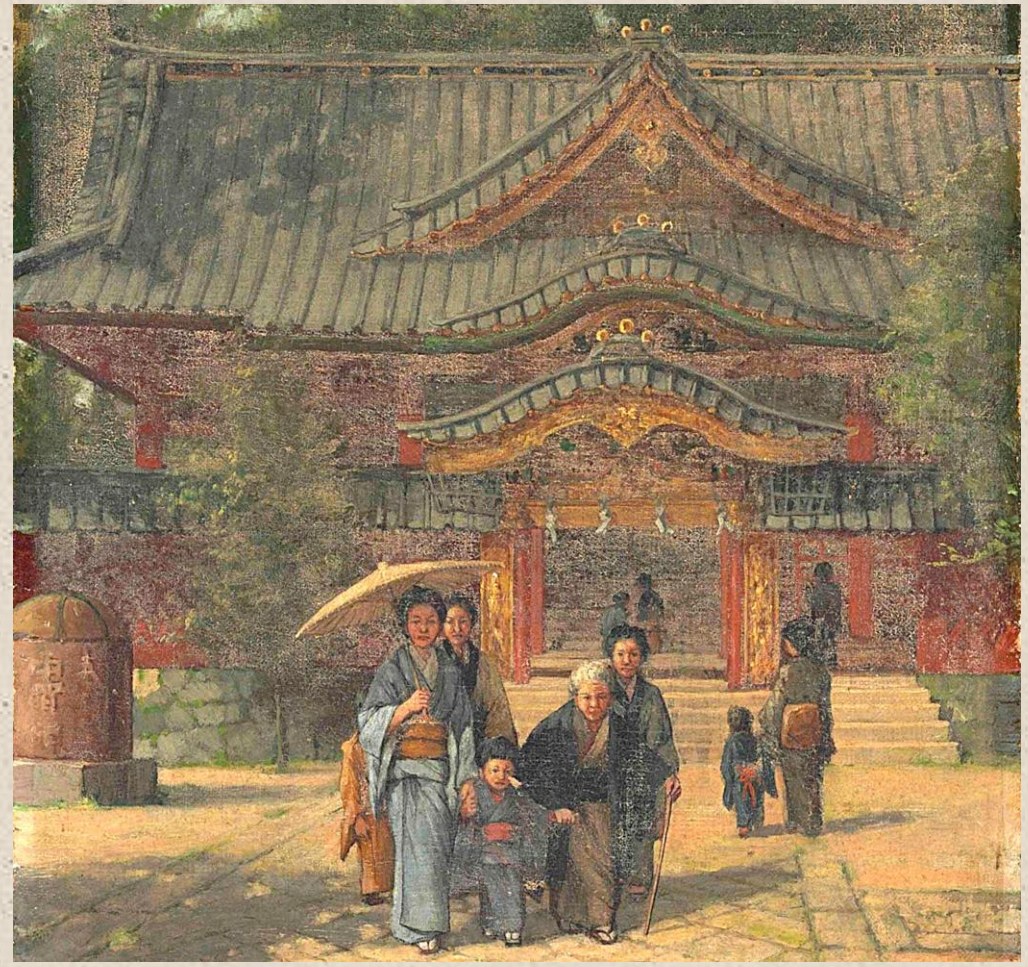
Further south, Africans had a belief in a supreme creator, along with a pantheon of gods and spirits. Also included was ancestor veneration, and the concept of an interconnected spirit world alongside the human realm, often animistic and polytheistic, incorporating shamanistic practices. This pleased the evil one, particularly when it involved human sacrifice.

Surprisingly Judaism arrived in Ethiopia; I imagine around the same time as the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon, about 950 B.C.

Believers are there to this day.

Shinto

Mark 5



A Shrine Visit by Harada Naojirō (19th century)

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan, known as the "way of the kami" or spirits, who are believed to inhabit natural phenomena, objects, and even people.

Seems like they have something tangible here. Jesus was casting spirits out of people during His three-year mission.

Jesus stepped out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before Him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure You by God, do not torment me." For He was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." And he begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. So, He sent them into a herd of pigs and the man came to his right mind.

This is the kind of spirit promoted by the ruler of this world, though this one is rather extreme.

China

Peach Festival of the Queen Mother of the West, Freer Gallery of Art (17th-18th century)

In China, folk or salvationist religions, along with Confucianism and Taoism predominated.

The stated philosophy of Confucious, about 500 B.C., focused on ethics, morality, proper social relationships, and filial piety. It provided a secular framework for governing, emphasizing the Mandate of Heaven, or the heavenly appointment of rulers. (see Romans 13:1)

Taoism is rooted in the concept of the Dao (the Way), an impersonal cosmic power. Taoism emphasizes living in harmony with the natural flow of the universe and the importance of practices like breathing and meditation to achieve balance and prolong life.

The Chinese, like many other societies, sought peace in their realm. They did not know of Yahweh, I think, which was the Lord's way of showing mankind's desire for harmony and salvation but inability to reach it on their own.

Greek Gods

Zeus and Hera on Mount Ida by Andries Cornelis Lens (1775)

The Greek gods seem to have been started with the Minoan civilization (c. 3000 B.C.). According to Greek mythology, the world began when Gaia (the Earth) emerged from Chaos, an empty nothingness. She gave birth to the other gods. Eventually Zeus became ruler.

The stories of the gods are quite intricate, fascinating, and keeps one's eyes focused in a direction favored by the evil one.

Roman Gods

The Amazement of the Gods by Hans von Aachen (1590s)

The Roman gods, appearing around 500 B.C., were similar, even more detailed.

Jupiter, the ruler of the gods, is seated on a cloud. He is embracing the goddess Minerva, his daughter. The scene is witnessed by a gathering of the gods of Olympus, clearly shocked at what they see.

Nothing is forbidden to the gods, no matter how shocking.

Superb distraction for society. Aligns well with the ruler of this world's agenda. Now if they only worshipped him.

Norse God Thor

Donar-Thor by Max Friedrich Koch (1905)

Each civilization's myths were unique, addressing questions raised by the populace, and the evil one encouraged each and every one.

Thor, the god of thunder, storms, strength, and protection, embodied the ideal warrior and defender of humankind and the gods against the forces of chaos, like giants**.**

Were there giants in the land? In the Bible, Goliath was said to be around 9'6" and Og's bed over 13' long.

Hammurabi

Trial Before Hammurabi Anonymous (1915) colored by ChatGPT

Men wrote laws to maintain order long ago. One of the first we have evidence for is Hammurabi in Babylon around 1770 B.C.

One's own conscience, family, or tribe are unable to restrain evil's influence. The flesh is fallen and unable to live a perfect life.

So, Hammurabi created the first known list of laws to restrain and punish our evil nature. Little did he realize law is only a temporary fix. Moses (1300 B.C.) followed the same path while using the Law from God's own hand.

Grace replaced law with the sacrificial death of Christ. You are forgiven simply by accepting His gift.

Molech

Leviticus 18

Offering to Molech by Charles Foster (1897) colored by ChatGPT

During the time of Moses (around 1300 B.C.), many made offering to Molech, a false god demanding the sacrifice of children placed in his fiery arms.

Sacrifice was indeed required of the Hebrews, but innocent animals, not human beings. Seems as though this god was mocking our Creator. There were many others.

South American Cultures

Mayan Ruins, Yucatan by Robert Seldon Duncanson (1848)

Ancient South American religions varied by culture but generally featured polytheism and animism, with powerful, nature-based deities and practices tied to daily life.

The Inca, for example, centered their religion on the sun god Inti, with a state cult and emperor connections to the divine.

The Tiwanaku people practiced rituals with hallucinogens and created significant stone monoliths.

Here we have Mayan ruins. Sadly, most religions practiced human sacrifice.

Christianity arrived with the Spaniards.

North American Cultures

The Cahokia Mounds by Michael Hampshire (2023)

The same applied to North American cultures.

The sophisticated Mississippian civilization centered at Cahokia practiced human sacrifice, evidenced by mass graves.

Some tribes, such as the Taensa, Natchez, Timucua, and Susquehannock performed child sacrifice to avert disasters or for other ritualistic reasons.

Every society found ways to explain what they experienced, seeing a world of beauty punctuated by trouble or disaster.

The Lord dealt with man in a number of ways allowing them to establish their own law to maintain order. This all changed with Christ, who brought an age of grace for those willing to accept it.

Siddhartha Gautama – The Buddha

The Great Statue of Amida Buddha at Kamakura, Known as the Daibutsu, from the Priest's Garden by John La Farge (1887)

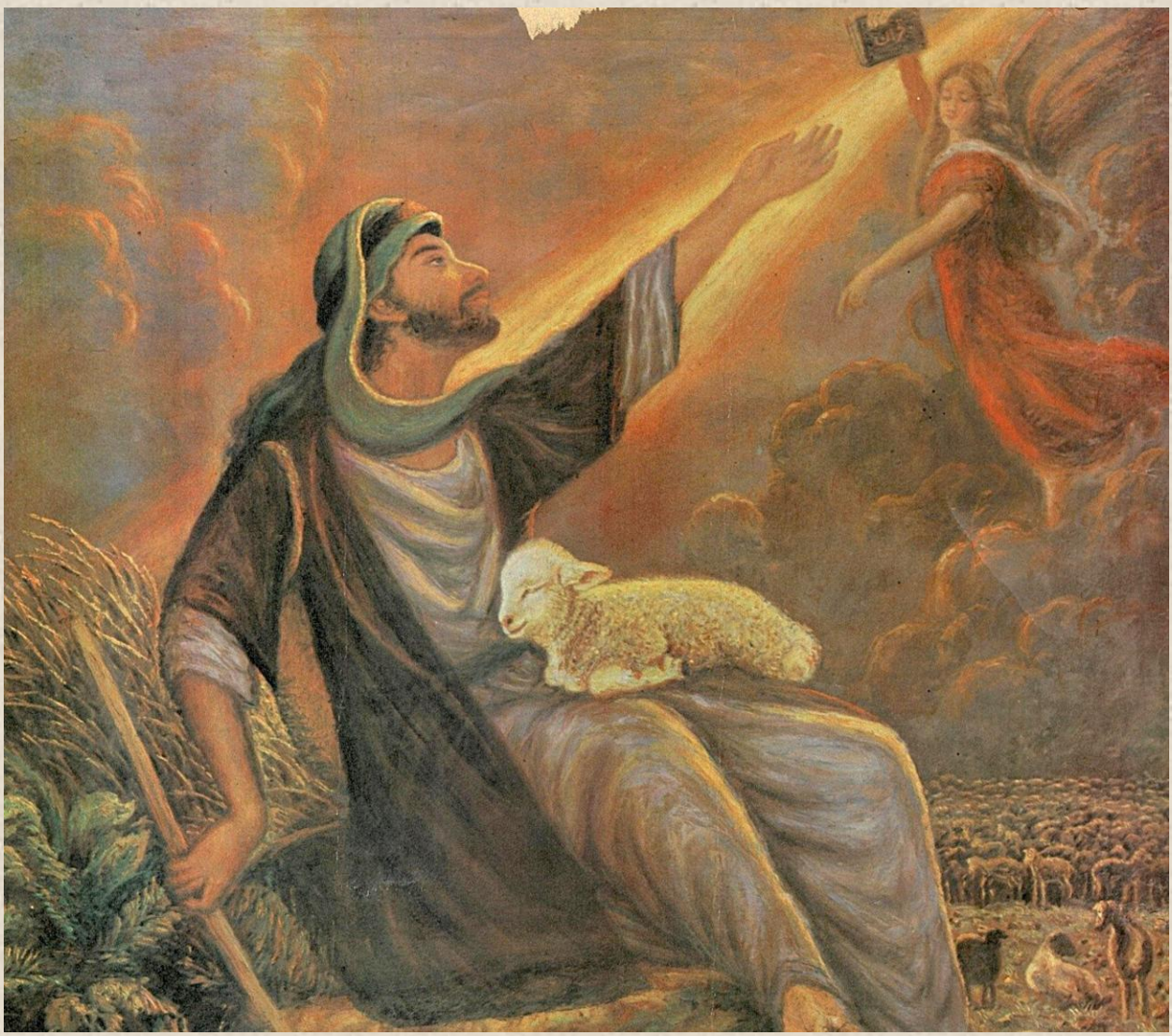
Here is a painting of a statue of the cosmic Buddha of radiant light. There are many Buddhas.

The first, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, was called to leave his family in search of a solution to suffering, which he claims to have found while meditating around 528 B.C.

To end suffering, one needs to end desire. To do this, one needs to follow the eightfold path: Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Sounds welcoming, passive and peaceful. You can make your own way in this world and find "enlightenment." Of course, it ignores the One who made us, sustains us, and holds all things together. (1 Colossians 1:17)

Islam



Christian Bromberger Collection - Posters from the Islamic Revolution period (Iran, 1978-1979)

Mohammad, prophet of Islam, extends his hand towards the reported Archangel Gabriel (Djibril) who supposedly handed him the Quran in the year 610 A.D. The caption that went with this poster says, the holy representation of the revered Prophet Muhammad when he was a 25-year-old shepherd. At the time Christianity was greatly expanding.

The ruler of this world created Islam specifically to deny Christ as the Son of God, as stated in Islamic prayer five times a day. Jesus, the Quran says, was a great prophet, taken by God, but He was not crucified; someone who resembled Him was crucified. Surah An-Nisa (4:157-158) There was no sacrifice.

Islam holds adherents in bondage and fear of death if they leave or question their faith. It is called the religion of the sword for good reason. They are commanded to kill all non-believers, having a particular hatred for Jews and Christians.

Islam tries to distance God from the people, so we don't see His Forgiving Spirit and amazing sacrifice for our benefit. Islam also employs taqiyya, the approved practice of deception for self-protection.

Sikhism

Hebrews 9

The Golden Temple at Amritsar by William Carpenter (1854)

Sikhism is an Indian religion and philosophy originating in the Punjab region near the end of the 15th century. Developed from the spiritual teachings of Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the faith's first guru.

Sikhism emphasizes faith and meditation in the name of the one creator, the equality of all people, engaging in selfless service to others, and striving for justice for the benefit and prosperity of all. To break the cycle of reincarnation, one must overcome ego.

This is a wonderfully peaceful religion which contends you will repeat lives until you get it right.

This is a distraction. Christ is the only way, and Scripture says, *man is appointed to die once, and after that comes judgment*. You don't get multiple chances.

Gnosticism

Allegory of Divine Wisdom by Luca Giordano (1680-1684)

Gnosticism affected a variety of philosophies and religions blending Greek, Persian, and Jewish ideas beginning in the 1st century near Alexandria or the Levant. Curiously, it became widespread in the 2nd and 3rd centuries within early Christianity.

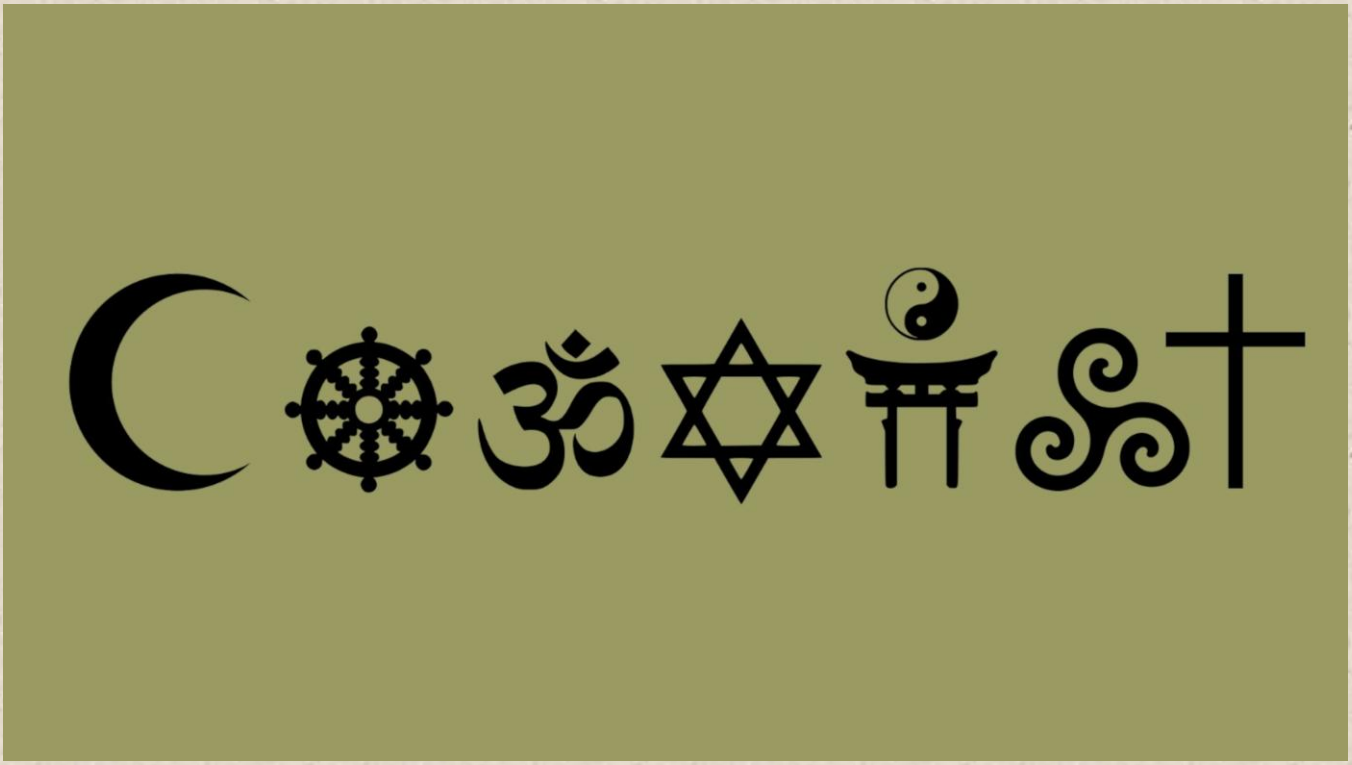
Gnosticism held that a Supreme God created divine beings (Aeons) who gave birth to others, with Sophia, whose name means wisdom in Greek, being last. She gave birth to a misshappened creature (Demiurge) who created the world, including Adam and Eve. This concept of creation holds that everything material is evil. Christ, for them, came to awaken human souls to their own divine spark.

The way to salvation was for humans to gain secret mystical knowledge (gnosis) of one's true nature and origin, which frees the soul from the material world. Wonder where this knowledge was gained?

Seems to me the evil one found some way to spread all kinds of secret mystical knowledge. There were many forms of Gnosticism, and it can still be found today.

Coexist

John 14



Coexist Tattoo by Iago Casabiell González (2018)

Most of us have seen a Coexist tattoo, sticker, or poster.

They proclaim tolerance between religions. This version includes the Islamic Crescent for "C", the Buddhist Dharmachakra for "o", the Hindi Om for "e", the Jewish Star of David for "x", the Shinto Torii and the Taoist Taijitu for "i", the Celtic Triple Spiral representing paganism for "s", and the Christian Cross for "t".

Sounds so tolerant and loving.

Certainly, we ought to never belittle anyone for their beliefs, because I believe those who deny Christ are being beguiled. What's your answer to hearing lies? Allow me to respectfully suggest we speak truth.

I choose to proclaim Christ as *the way, the truth and the life.* The fact there is no grave ought to speak loudly. That many died attesting to the same, troubling. That there are thousands of years of writing prophesying Jesus' role, instructive. That He gave us what I believe is an infallible book, the Bible, clear guidance from a loving Father. Read it.

And if you are serious about finding truth, you will research all possible paths to be convinced of the veracity of your choice.

The Jews

Hosea 5

The Seven Rabbis in Jerusalem by Théodore Ralli (1895-1907)

The Jews acknowledge Jesus was crucified and died, which is why He can't be their Messiah. They claim their Messiah will never die.

This is a lie of the evil one.

The Jews are still the Lord's chosen people, but they will continue to be persecuted while they deny the Son.

Eventually they will see the truth, then He will return. I think this verse speaks to the issue.

I will return again to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face, and in their distress earnestly seek Me.

Atheism

Photographic portrait of Karl Marx by John Jabez Edwin Mayall (1875) colored by ChatGPT

Atheism rejects the notion of deities. The world for them is simply what you hear, see, taste, touch, and smell – nothing else. No gods, angels, devils, or spirits.

If the evil one can convince you he doesn't exist, he's won.

Karl Marx was one of the most infamous atheists. He was that German philosopher, economist, journalist and revolutionary socialist who wrote the Communist Manifesto. He believed religion was the opiate of the people, used to manipulate others.

Perhaps he was the one being manipulated.

Not Worthy

Matthew 12/Mark 3

The Criminal by Ramon Martí Alsina (1866)

There are those who believe they are so lost, they are beyond help. Having spent their lives scraping a living by committing criminal acts, they know the divine does not condone such behavior and are convinced they will never be forgiven.

They are wrong. The Lord forgives all but blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The evil one will continue to highlight your unworthiness.

We all feel unworthy, but to the Lord we are of immense value, which explains His sacrifice.

You need only repent (Luke 13) and accept Christ's sacrifice. Do not lose hope.

Dragons

Revelation 12

Saint George and the Dragon by Jacopo Tintoretto (1555)

Most of us have heard about Saint George slaying the dragon. It's rather amazing how popular stories and images of dragons have become. They seem particularly prevalent in mythology and Eastern culture. We all seem pleased by their powerful appearance.

Imagine how surprised people are when they learn the evil one is known as the great red dragon.

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

The evil one skillfully works his way into popular culture to corrupt everything he touches while being very hard to recognize. Let's carefully consider the things we celebrate.

Holidays

Jeremiah 10

The Christmas Tree by Albert Chevallier Tayler (1911)

Holidays, for example – what lovely times of the year, with family, friends, patriotism and faith. Christmas, our most beloved, has been around for centuries, a time to share in various festivities.

Did you know the act of decorating a tree actually has a history dating back thousands of years? *Thus says the Lord: "Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move…"* Ancient history to be sure.

What's in your heart is what matters, but you might want to understand the historical context of the days we celebrate.

Feast Days

Leviticus 23

The Passover Lamb by Palma il Giovane (1580-1581)

The Lord provided Moses with a list of Feasts: Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

They anticipate the coming of the Messiah, representing rest, His death, sinless burial, resurrection, coming of the Spirit, arrival, debt paid, and life with us; subject to some scholarly debate.

The evil one does his best to distort or dismiss them.

The Accuser

Job 1/Zechariah 3/Revelation 12

Satan before the Lord by Corrado Giaquinto (1750)

The evil one opposes Messiah and attempts to corrupt and accuse all. In fact, his name, Satan, means the accuser. He deceived Eve, questioned the loyalty of Job, and accused Zechariah. He accuses all believers, day and night before the Lord, but he will be cast down.

Lost

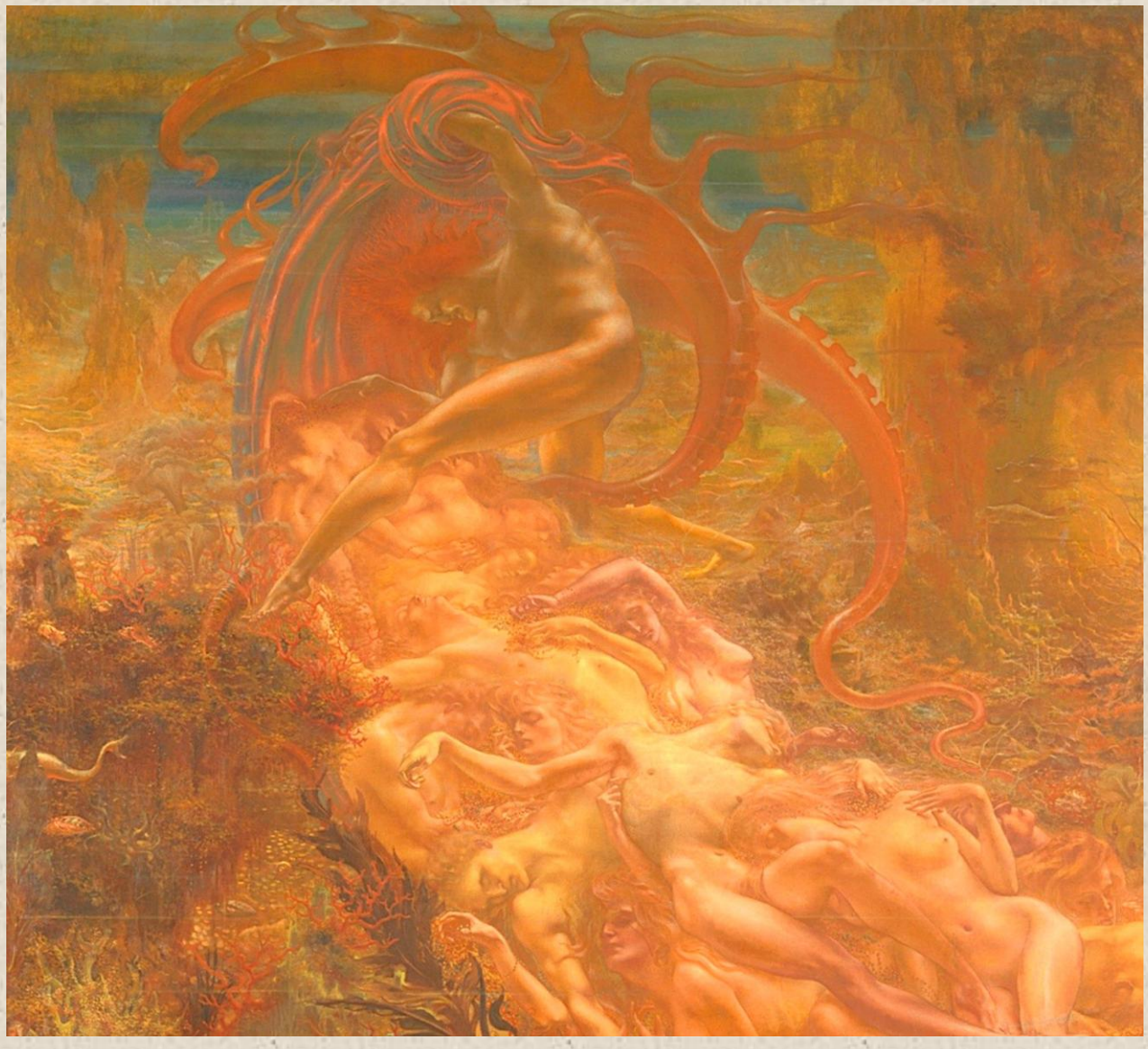
Romans 1

The Desperate Man by Gustave Courbet (1843-1845)

The evil one influences many to dismiss truth, even when it's obvious. Those lost are unwilling to acknowledge God, so God gives them over to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done, things which make no sense.

Use reason, acknowledge the Lord.

The Illusions



Satan's Treasures by Jean Delville (1895)

In America today the ruler of this world encourages all things unnatural: Abortion is acceptable, after all embryos are not people; gender is fluid; sexually love those of your own sex; don't need a mother or father nor is there any need for marriage; seek fortune and pleasure; avoid work. Everything opposite to the natural order established by our Creator.

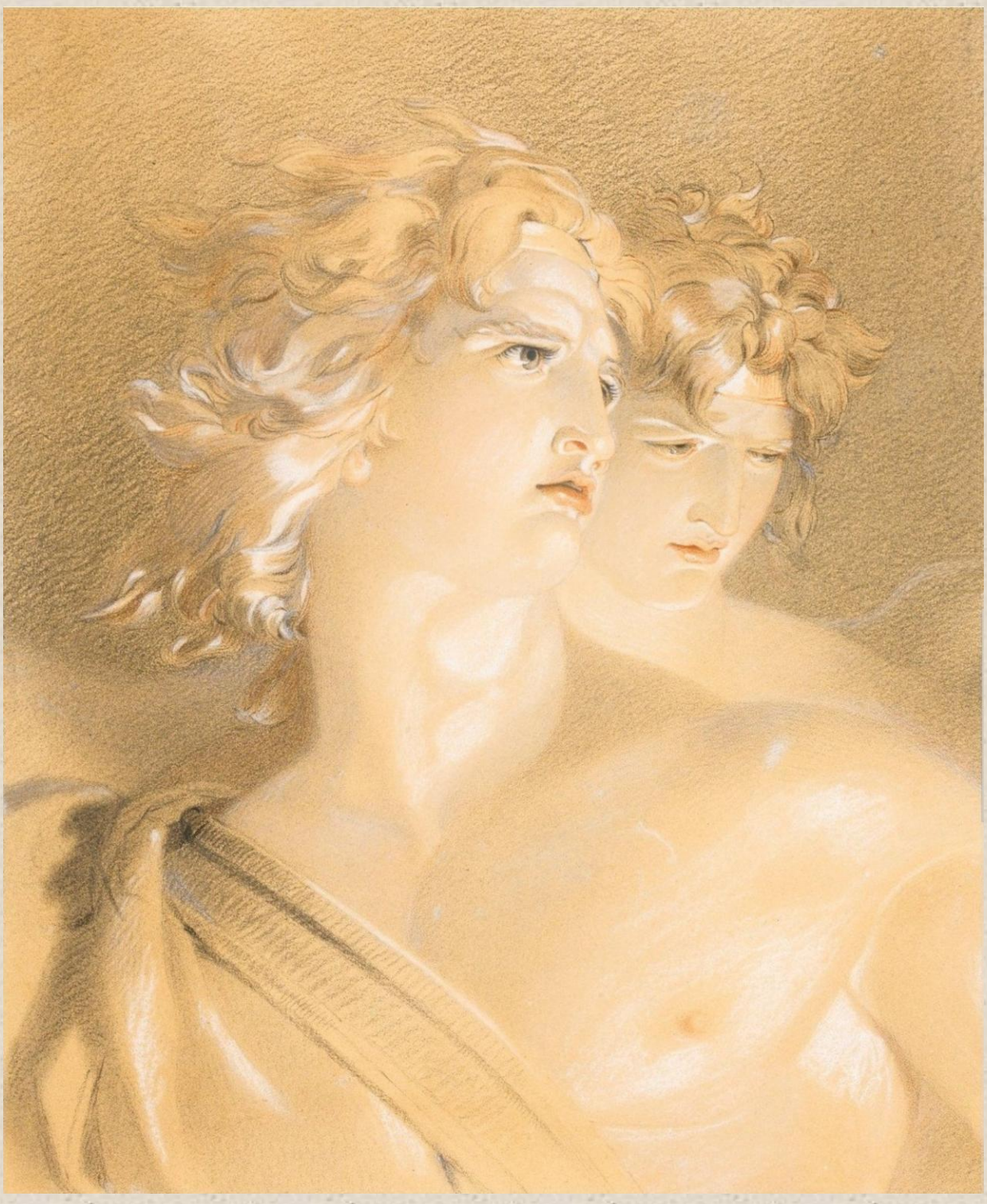
Here those who follow Satan, representing the material world and illusion, are slumbering, fallen in sensual pleasure and gold, sunken in an oceanic realm.

Such is the life of those without God. Anyone who opposes them should be eliminated in their eyes, which is why there is no remorse for violence against Christians. They have no restraints.

Ponder your own perspective. Are we intolerant of those who see life's issues differently? Try to listen… seriously listen, so we understand the other's perspective. Then respectfully provide your own with patience and love.

Angel of Light

2 Corinthians 11



Satan as the Fallen Angel by Sir Thomas Lawrence (1797)

Beware of false *apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So, it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.*

Abortion

Luke 1/Jeremiah 1/Exodus 21

Mary goes into the hill country of Judea and salutes Elizabeth by William Hole (1846-1917)

Abortion is frequently chosen by women who believe their child is a burden or simply inconvenient. The Lord forms every life.

Here Elizabeth, six months pregnant, welcomes her relative Mary, who just conceived through the Holy Spirit. The child in Elizabeth, who will be named John, leaped for joy at the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, now just an embryo in Mary. Even an embryo, a growing child, has identity.

Speaking to Jeremiah, first chapter, the Lord said to him: *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.* Evidence the Lord forms all children in the womb and knows them even earlier.

Under Moses, there were penalties for harming a child in the womb. *When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*

Please ponder your decision regarding your child carefully. If you've had an abortion, the Lord forgives you. You will likely see them in heaven.

Homosexuality

Leviticus 18

The School of Plato by Jean Delville (1898)

The painter depicts Plato teaching disciples in an ideal setting. They are androgenous figures. Plato seems to resemble Jesus of Nazareth in this painting. Might this be intentional, a deceptive way to approve such behavior?

This sensual painting attempts to normalize nudity and promote sex with any partner, which is a common perspective today.

God says: *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.* Such behavior is contrary to nature.

Jude warned us about those *who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.* They are likely influenced by the ruler of this world, who strives to oppose the Lord.

Perhaps you've been lured into such love. You are forgiven by accepting Jesus' sacrifice.

Marriage

Genesis 2

Adam and Eve by Lothar von Seebach (1910)

On the sixth day of creation, God created Adam, tasking him to name all the animals looking for a suitable partner. None was found, so He took one of Adam's ribs and created Eve. Adam responded, saying:

This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Her name was Eve, meaning life giver.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Clearly a reference to partnership through marriage and the creation of children through intercourse where they become and give birth to one flesh.

Children outside marriage are robbed of love and support, and the parents fail to take responsibility for their actions. If this occurred to you, ask for the forgiveness you will receive, and attempt to rectify mistakes.

The ruler of this world will try to convince you any type of sexual expression is appropriate. Consider the consequences and resist his invitation.

Gender Confusion

Deuteronomy 22

Nebuchadnezzar by William Blake (1795-1805)

I feel for those who struggle with gender confusion. I understand we simply want to feel comfortable in our own body. Normally such confusion passes. Call on God to help you through every difficulty. Every circumstance serves a purpose.

The fact is you cannot change the way God made you. DNA is not modifiable.

Oh, you can dress differently and you can cut up your body, but none of that is normal, and will likely lead to greater difficulties.

Scripture is quite clear. *A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God.*

Here Nebuchadnezzar experiences dysphoria. The Lord took away his reason, making him behave as an ox eating grass for seven years because of his pride. At the end of his punishment, he regained his rightful mind, praising and honoring the Most High.

Idleness

2 Thessalonians 3

The Pilgrim at the Gate of Idleness by Edward Burne-Jones (1884)

We seem to be saddled with fully capable individuals who take advantage of our welfare system, choosing idleness instead of work. The ruler of this world has deceived them to believe they can use others or they're justified because of some perceived wrongdoing.

Allow me to remind you of Paul's guidance.

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

This painting is one of three telling the story of a pilgrim. Here they come to the gate of idleness, and thankfully refuse the invitation to enter. Life is about our choices.

Prostitution

In the Brothel by Jan van Bijlert (1625-1630)

Of course, illicit sex is a good way to keep individuals from following the true God. He desires appropriate behavior.

Addictions

James 4

An Opium Den at Lime Street by Lingering Clouds, Royal Academy of Arts (1889)

Any kind of addiction affects our focus, because we are continually looking for the next fix. Here we have an opium den, once quite popular. Now we have a myriad of drugs and other behaviors which steal our attention and ruin our bodies. The evil one is thrilled.

What's the way out? *Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Then you can attempt to regain control without his influence. Do not be afraid to ask for help.

Pride

Proverbs 16/James 4

Allegory of Vanity by Jacques de L'Ange (1642)

Our own attitudes can be deceptive. What do we worship? Ourselves or God.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you… Cleanse your hands… purify your hearts. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

I suppose it comes down to what we value most.

Greed

Luke 12/1 Timothy 6

The Allegory of Avarice by Paulus Moreelse (1621)

What about money?

Jesus said to *take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*

And Paul warned us *those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

The evil one will encourage all kinds of desires.

Gluttony

Philippians 3/Proverbs 6

Peasant holding an earthenware jug; Allegory of Gluttony by Joos van Craesbeeck (1635-1661)

Paul told the Philippians, *"Many… walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things."*

These are a few of the deadly sins: pride, greed, and gluttony, along with wrath, envy, lust, and sloth (mentioned as idleness earlier), all of which are normal things in life taken to the extreme, as the ruler of this world desires. Who doesn't enjoy a good drink or meal? But in excess they become destructive.

Consider also the things God despises… *There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

These differ because they involve malicious intent!

Excessive Entertainment

An Election Entertainment by William Hogarth (1755)

There is nothing wrong with hosting or seeking moderate entertainment. We have many events to celebrate.

But like the issue tied to the deadly sins, an excessive focus on finding distractions to escape life is promoted by the evil one.

Whether listening to music, attending theatrical presentations, enjoying sporting events, viewing online content, avoid excess.

Civil Unrest

Unrest in Mogadishu by Mcks6002123 (2023)

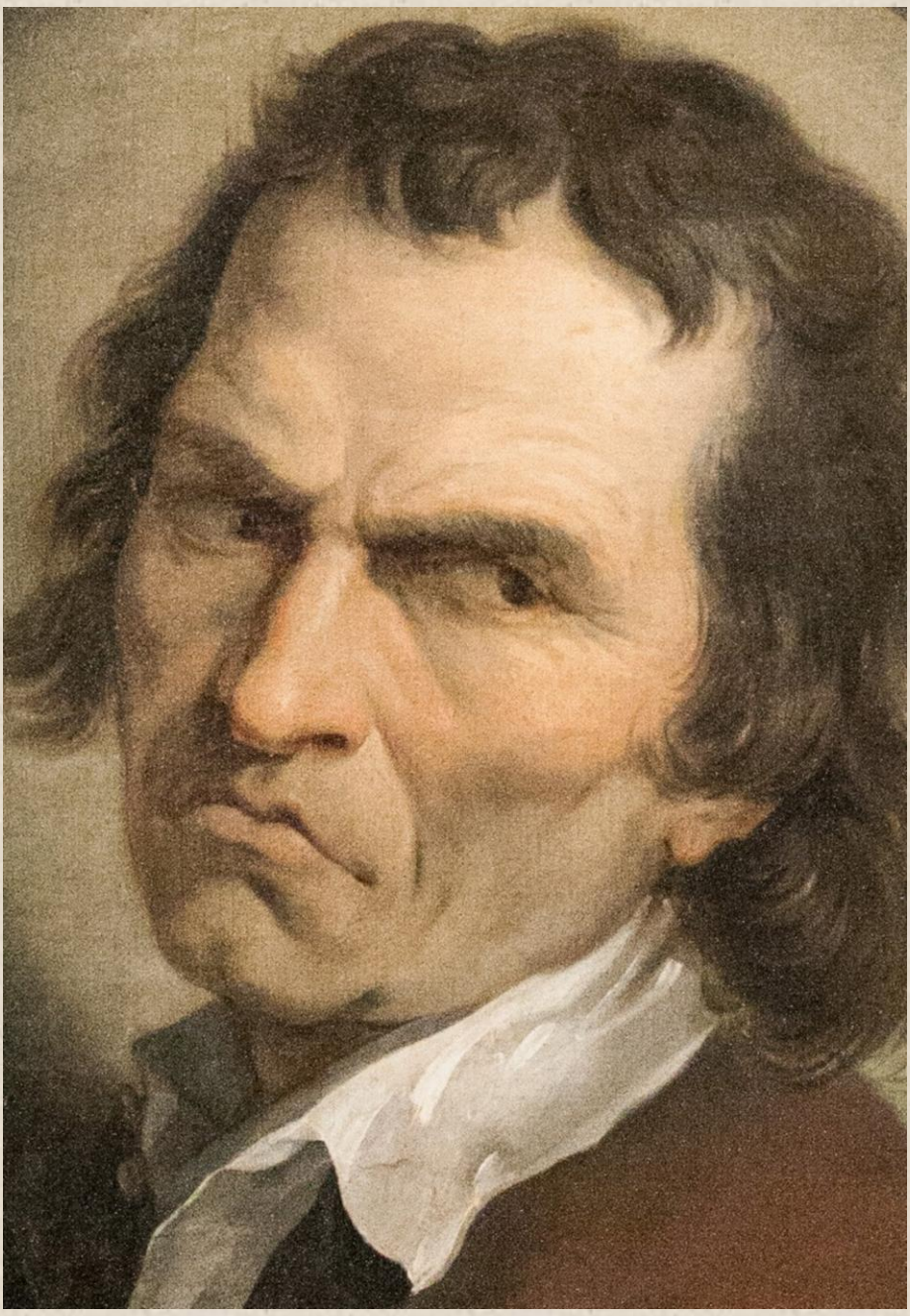
I am convinced that the evil one is behind all civil unrest. Chaos is one of his markers.

Here we have the burning of Mogadishu, involving the terrorist group Al-Shabaab's taxation on a suffering population.

Political tensions may be sincere or abusive, but too often result in violence and destruction.

The evil one is thrilled. Avoid chaos.

Hatred



In Contempt of Hate by Ernest Joseph Bailly (1792)

Unrest begins with hate. This extreme form of anger is beyond limits and sets the stage for uncontrolled lashing out which allows for intended and unintended violence.

Remember, *hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs*. (Proverbs 10:12)

John told us, *everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*. (1 John 3:15)

All of which began with the evil one, whom Jesus identified as a murderer. (John 8:44)

Fear

2 Timothy 1

The Man Made Mad with Fear by Gustave Courbet (1844)

Who also promotes fear: fear of failure, fear of circumstances, fear of the future, and many, many more.

Paul wrote *God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power, and love, and self-control*.

And you may receive this spirit simply by asking. (Luke 11:13)

Temptations

2 Corinthians 3

The Temptation of St Anthony by David Teniers II (1640s)

Evil thoughts assault even the best of us. The flesh is weak and naturally selfish. What matters is what you do with such thoughts.

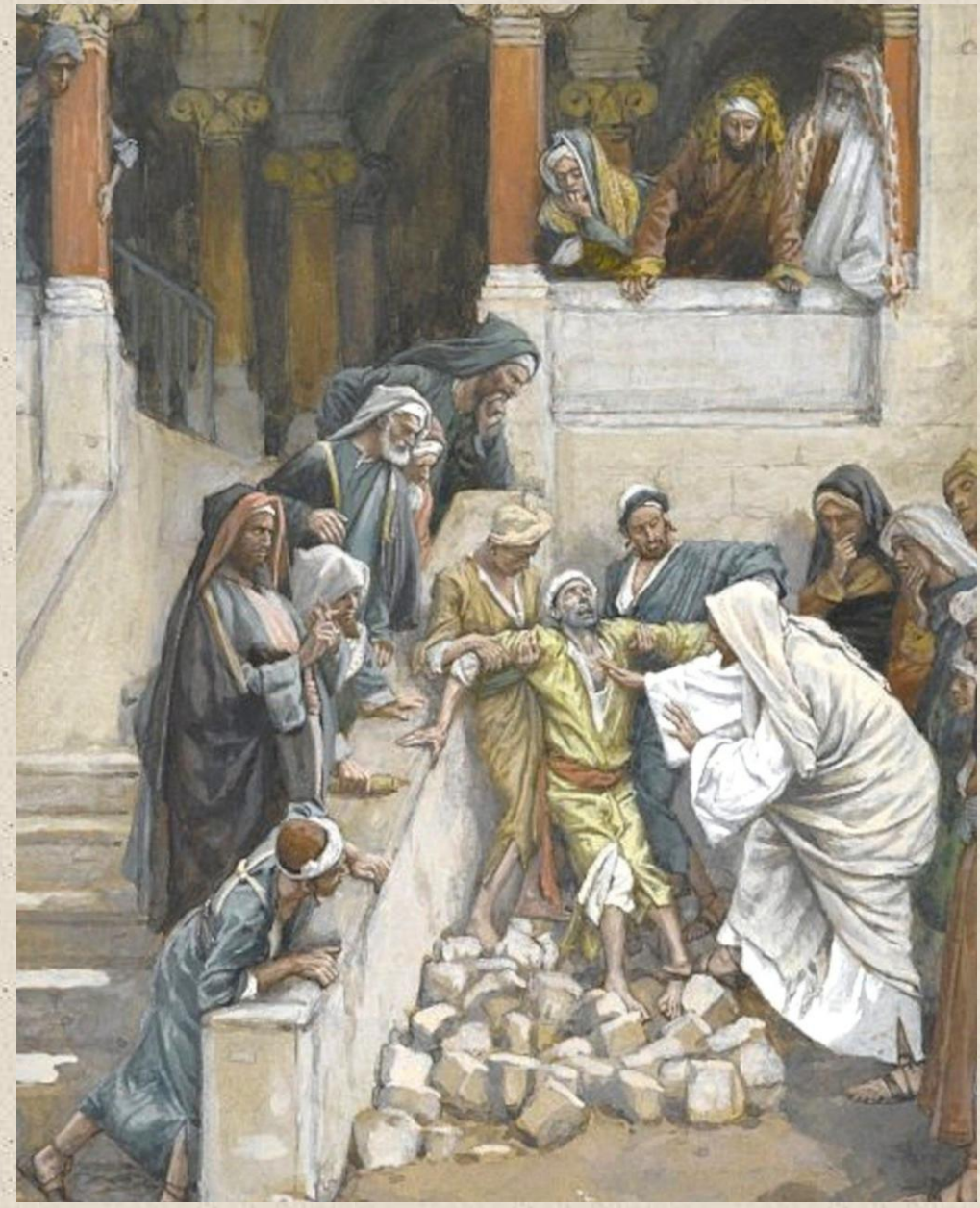
Turn to the Lord and, as mentioned before, resist such influence.

Religions have rules to keep. Societies have laws to obey. Jesus has neither. He did the work, and when you accept His sacrifice, His Spirit enters you and changes you from the inside.

We live by grace and love, not by law.

Oppression

Matthew 12



The Blind and Mute Man Possessed by Devils by James Tissot (1886-1894)

Jesus cast evil spirits out of many people. I imagine we are still oppressed by them today.

Most people ignore the idea of spirits affecting our perception of the world, but if you listen to those in the deliverance ministry, evil spirits can be debilitating and encompass all kinds of negativity.

I have a friend who was delivered from two different spirits by listening to the late Derek Prince's video, How to be Delivered from Demons. The story of his life is fascinating.

I would recommend you research the idea of demon oppression, which I think affects us all to some degree.

Lake of Fire

Revelation 20

Halemaumau, Lake of Fire by David Howard Hitchcock (1888)

This struggle will end one day, and the evil one done away with. First locked up, chained for Christ's millennial reign.

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Everyone can avoid such an end. Research every perspective of life. Read every holy book with the goal of finding God. He made a path. He wrote a book. We call it the Bible.

Use reason. What book prophesized His arrival for thousands of years? What book records His divine power on Earth by eyewitnesses who were willing to die to attest to the truth? You will find, I firmly believe, that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Witnessed

The Ascension of Christ by Pieter Jozef Verhaghen (1800)

What person has risen from the dead after three days in the tomb, appeared numerous times to a multitude of people in the flesh, and then risen to the heavens in front of a crowd, afterwards speaking to individuals in the spirit?

Only One!

And the people who witnessed these events wrote about them. Eyewitness accounts of amazing, divine actions! And they refused to recant when threaten with punishment and death. Most died martyrs.

Some today are willing to die for their faith in the act of killing others in hatred for a promised reward in the afterlife. They are being deceived.

But the ones I hold high died loving others, trying to tell them of the Way.

All beliefs are not equal. That is a lie of the evil one. There is only one way to God! Read it for yourself with an open mind.

New Heaven and Earth

Revelation 21

The New Jerusalem by Gustave Dore (1890) colored by ChatGPT

Here an angel shows John what is to come. You will participate as well by choosing Christ.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Still Here

Ezekiel 28/Revelation 12/Revelation 20

Saint Michael expelling Lucifer and the Rebel Angels
by the workshop of Peter Paul Rubens (1622)

So why is Lucifer/Satan still here?

He began as an anointed guardian cherub until the Lord found unrighteousness in him. Michael expelled him and his followers from Heaven. Now as the ruler of this world, he deceives mankind. He will be chained for Christ's millennial reign, then released to cause chaos, before joining others in the Lake of Fire.

What purpose does his continued existence serve?

I can only conclude that the Lord uses him to serve as one who deceives to draw like-minded individuals, those not suited for further service.

Those who seek truth and accept Christ will assist our Creator for eternity. May we be among them.

Author

Commander George J Thielemann (USN, Ret) and his wife Telli

BA Psychology University of Wisconsin (Madison), MAT Education Northwestern University, MA National Security Naval War College, USN 1976-2005, as Naval Flight Officer hunting Russian submarines from P3C aircraft, ASWOC Director Keflavik, Iceland, Officer Candidate School Director, USAF Academy Assistant Professor of Political Science, CCG-7 N6 overseeing afloat Naval Force communications in the Arabian Sea for Afghan Operation Enduring Freedom after 9/11. Elementary School Teacher 1973-1976 and 2005-2019, Peace Corps Thailand volunteer until Covid shutdown worldwide 2020. Lifelong Biblical scholar. Both George and Telli are cancer survivors, and volunteered for various organizations, including Hospice. Author of The Volume of the Book: Christ Through Scripture.

We will see Him

Christ Appearing to St. Ampelius by Pompeo Batoni (1740-1745)